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# HINDU THEISM:

*A DEFENCE AND EXPOSITION.*

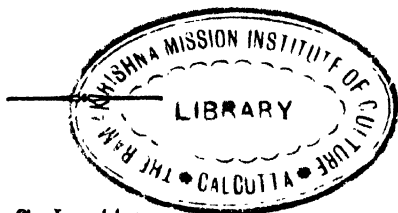


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TO THE SACRED MEMORY OF

**Raja Ram Mohun Roy,**

THE REVIVER OF HINDU THEISM IN RECENT TIMES

AND

*The Greatest Religious Reformer of India in the  
Nineteenth Century,*

THIS BRIEF EXPOSITION OF THE RELIGION FOR THE RE-  
ESTABLISHMENT OF WHICH IN HIS NATIVE COUNTRY  
HE LIVED AND DIED,

IS INSCRIBED WITH PROFOUND REVERENCE AND GRATITUDE,

BY ONE OF HIS HUMBLEST FOLLOWERS.





## PREFACE.

Those who have read the author's earlier writings, his essays on Theism published in three series under the titles of *Gleams of the New Light*, *The Roots of Faith* and *Whispers from the Inner Life*, and his philosophical essay in Bengali, entitled *Brahmajijnasa*, will notice a certain change of attitude in the treatise he now offers to the public. This change of attitude, the careful reader will see, does not involve any change of doctrine, so far as fundamental principles are concerned. The Theism expounded in the present work is, in essential features, the same Theism of which he attempted a philosophical defence, in a rather imperfect form, in the *Roots of Faith*, and in a fuller and more elaborate form in *Brahmajijnasa*, and of which the devotional and practical aspects were presented in a popular form in the *Gleams* and the *Whispers*. But he must confess that, since writing the *Brahmajijnasa*, he has made what amounts to a discovery so far as he is concerned, namely that the Theism he has been believing and following as an ideal of life for some time past is, in all essential features, the Hindu Theism, the Theism of the *Upanishads* and the sacred literature founded on them. This 'discovery' led to a somewhat close study of the *Upanishads*, the *Brahma-Sutras* and some of the later works on Vedantism, which confirmed the truth of the 'discovery' and led to the change of attitude visible in the present work. To this study is due also whatever development of doctrine the reader may discern in the expositions offered herein.

The fundamental difference of Hindu Theism from the two other types of Theism current in civilized societies, viz. the Hebrew, including the Christian, and the Greek, will be found explained at some length in the introductory essay, in which there will also be found a defence of the truth, ignored by many Theists, both of this and other countries, that Theism will never succeed either as a personal or a national religion unless it keeps itself in close contact with the treasured spiritual experience of the past.

It is perhaps necessary to mention here that some of the essays composing this volume appeared as articles in some daily and weekly journals; but in their present form most of them have undergone considerable additions and alterations.

CALCUTTA,        }  
*August, 1898.*    }

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## HINDU THEISM.

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AMONG the greatest discoveries of the age, may be reckoned the recognition of the unity of all civilized faiths,—with the doubtful exception of certain forms of Buddhism,—in a broad, universal Theism, in the doctrine of a supreme, indivisible Spirit-God that underlies all particular systems of doctrine and practice. We call this a discovery, for, though the fundamental unity of all religions was indistinctly felt before by isolated minds gifted with special insight into the truth of things, the opportunities, now so universally afforded, for the comparative study of religion in all its varied phases, were all but absent even so late as the first quarter of the present century. The truth in question, therefore,—the fundamental agreement of all systems in a catholic, unsectarian Theism being, as it is, the result of this comparative study of Theology, has really come upon the world with the force and freshness of a discovery. That it is a newly discovered truth, is further evidenced by the unwillingness of a large, though diminishing class of people to accept it. These people sincerely fail to see any unity, the unity of Theism specially, in creeds so heterogenous as Hinduism and Judaism, Christianity and Islamism. They refuse to believe that Hindus worship the same God as Christians, and that the worship that offers sacrifices and practises penances is, in

substance, the same thing as the worship that offers praise and prayers. The truth itself, however, which has, in reality, laid the axe at the root of all sectarianism and the innumerable evils arising therefrom, is daily gaining ground, and laying the foundations of a universal Brotherhood.

But all discoveries exert, at first, a dazzling influence on the mind, and the one we are dealing with forms no exception to the general rule. In a newly discovered truth, we are apt to see too much truth, if the expression may be permitted. It takes some time to see the limitations of a theory, the degree of truth it really contains and that which its first advocates claim for it, and which its first recipients admit in its favour, but which cannot justly be acknowledged as its due. The truth that there is a common Theism at the basis of all refined national and universal creeds, a Theism in which Hinduism and Muhamudanism, Judaism and Christianity are one, is a truth which has many limitations, and neither as a creed nor as a rule of life should it be made too much of. In the first place, a Theism that unites systems so many and so various cannot be formulated except in the barest form possible. It can be stated only as the doctrine of a Supreme Being lying at the root of things. You cannot give it any concrete determinations, any definite forms without detracting from its universality,—making it particular, national or personal. If we consider, for example, the question of the way in which the Supreme Being is related to the world, we shall find we cannot answer the question in a manner that is com-

mon' to all religions.—our answer, we shall see, must be either Hindu or Christian, Judaistic or Muhamudan, taking for granted what is indeed more than doubtful, that each of these religions gives a unanimous and unmistakable answer to the question. Again, on more practical topics, those of ideals and disciplines needful for the formation of the moral and spiritual character,—things following directly from the ideas we form about man's relation to God and the relation of this world to the next,—we shall find that it is impossible to pronounce any opinion from the stand-point of a bare, indeterminate Theism, and that Theism cannot be our guide in such matters unless it takes particular forms,—forms more or less identified with particular nations, communities or individuals. Wherever Theism has been a power, wherever it has awakened a sense of sin and unworthiness and thus given rise to a struggle for a better, holier life; wherever it has caused an outburst of the higher emotions of the soul and thereby created a thirst for the life beatific, wherever it has brought into view higher ideals of social life than what it has found around, and has thus led to the formation of reformed communities,—wherever it has achieved all this, or even a part of this, it has done so after assuming concrete forms,—manifesting itself in particular systems of Philosophy and Theology, laying down definite ideals and rules of conduct, individual and social, and embodying itself in sacred literatures commanding general respect and attention, and even identifying itself with the lives and utterances of particular individuals.



It is therefore the result of immature wisdom and inadequate experience to attempt to form churches and communities, nay even to build personal religion, on bare Theism,—to cry down and reject as sectarian the historical forms that Theism has hitherto assumed, and build upon the dry skeleton of abstract truth underlying these living, concrete forms. In the first place, even if the attempt could really be made, the religion resulting from dry and indefinite principles could not but be dry and indefinite in its character. Its doctrines, its system of moral and spiritual culture, and the feelings and aspirations it could awaken, would all be vague and indefinite. Wherever such attempts have been made, either in this country or elsewhere, the result has been as we have stated. In the second place, the attempt cannot really be made with any consistency. In formulating a Theology, however simple, in laying down rules and ideals for aspirants after the higher life, and in forming living organizations for spiritual and social reform, the bare, universal Theism of the theorist has had, in all cases, necessarily to undergo a concretising and particularising process, and it is in proportion to the extent it has done so, the extent to which it has become definite and particular, the extent to which it has identified itself with particular individuals and communities and embodied itself in particular literatures, and at the same time maintained its capacity for universal diffusion, has it succeeded in attaining its supreme end of bringing salvation to man. Those who disown all national and local forms of religion and all

individual embodiments of religious life and doctrine, and say that they have no scriptures and no prophets, or,—what, for all practical purposes, comes to the same thing,—that all scriptures and prophets are their own,—these people, we say, with a sort of curious unconsciousness, set up their own writings as scriptures and their own selves as prophets for the acceptance of their fellow-beings. As a matter of fact, such communities of bare Theism come to have their systems of Theology and Sociology and their saints, prophets and guides also, in the course of time ; but the rejection of the treasured experience of their ancestors, of the guidance furnished by ages of wisdom, retard their progress at every step, and dooms them to terrible depths of dearth and lifelessness, if not to utter and speedy destruction.

The historical forms of Theism, therefore, should not only be studied, but adhered to so far as this is consistent with free and progressive thought. The forms of worship inculcated by them, the disciplines, moral and spiritual, prescribed by them, should be followed, with only such changes as the altered conditions of social and moral life render necessary. And such adherence is far from being impossible. It is only the externalities, the outward forms, the verbal statements of spiritual truth, that change ; the eternal verities are ever the same. With a progressive community, it is not, at any rate it should not be, difficult to get the outer crust of religion changed from time to time. This is what the most progressive races of mankind, the Christians specially, and more or less all

civilized races,—races that are awakened from the slumber of barbarism to the reality of their true destiny and duties,—have been doing. The Christianity of the nineteenth century is a very different thing from that of the first; but in spite of the difference, the unity is distinctly visible. In the ripe features of the grown up man the lineaments of the child's face are clearly recognisable. The change has been gradual,—one stage naturally leading up to the higher. That is why Europe is still Christian even after the tremendous progress science has made. Science has changed what we have called the outer crust of Christianity; it has scarcely touched its essence.

The same is true, in a much deeper sense, of our national Theism, the Theism taught in the most revered of our scriptures, the *Upanishads*, developed in later Theistic writings, and deepened by the culture and experience of ten thousands of sages and saints. Modern Indian Theists commit one of the greatest blunders possible when they think, as some seem to do, that they can ignore the Theism that has come down from their ancestors,—ignore its literature, its systems of doctrine and discipline, and yet build up a Theism of their own, a purer and nobler one, by their individual thoughts and spiritual endeavours, and effect their and their country's salvation by means of it. It is the same blunder as that of a sciolist endeavouring to build up a system of Science without informing himself of the progress Science has made up to this time, or that of a rich man's son, refusing to use the stored up wealth of his

ancestors and striving to be rich through innumerable privations and difficulties. It is an endeavour which is hardly even possible. In every nation, there are tendencies of thought, feeling and practice which are the result of the spiritual culture of men who have lived the life of the spirit and have influenced their neighbours', lives both internally and externally. These influences have combined to give a certain shape to the national character, a shape which distinguishes it from other nations. However little we may consciously note this particular shape, however little we may care to study national literature and keep ourselves in touch with the thoughts and sentiments of the great mass of our people, however great may be the influence of foreign culture and literature upon our minds, it is impossible to free ourselves entirely from the spiritual bent which our minds have received as an inheritance from our fathers. Has it not been seen in innumerable cases, that men who have spent their lives in the study of foreign literature, and in foreign modes of thinking and living, have, with a certain growth of age and experience, felt an irresistible attraction for modes of thought and practice which are as old as the Vedas, but which, at the same time, guide and influence the national life even on the eve of the twentieth century. Though feeling the power of foreign conquest in the inmost parts of our life, in the very flow of our thoughts and feelings, are we not startled now and then by discovering how deeply Hindu we still are at the bottom—in the conclusions on things higher which commend themselves to our intellect, in the feel-

ings that move our inmost natures and in the modes of life and spiritual exercise in which we find the greatest comfort?

But is there really a distinct form of theistic thought which is Hindu in origin and character, and if there is such a Theism, can it maintain its ground at the present time? Is it as suitable to the present age as it was in the days when the *Upanishads* were composed? Questions like these are really asked by large classes of people, and in the present condition of our country, when our education is so largely secular and de-national, we cannot wonder, however we may regret, that such questions are ever asked. The first question—that relating to the distinctive character of Hindu Theism, may be easily answered, and we shall presently proceed to do so. The other question—that regarding the reasonableness of the religion of the *Upanishads*, can be answered only by a somewhat lengthy discussion like the one which we purpose to carry on in the course of the following essays.

There are three distinct forms of Theism that have influenced and are still influencing the religious thought of the more advanced races of mankind. They are the Hebrew, the Greek and the Hindu. Hebrew Theism forms the basis of Judaism, Christianity and Muhamudanism. Greek Theism, having, in old times, influenced Hellenic and Roman thought, may be said to live still in the thought of a large class of cultured people in the West, while Hindu Theism, besides forming the basis of all higher systems of Hindu faith and practice, may be

said to exist in a modified form at the root of the Buddhist system of doctrine and discipline. These three types of Theistic thought represent three stages of religious life, and as such, as natural outgrowths of religious exercise and culture, are not confined to particular countries or races, but may be found in all civilized societies. Their local names indicate the countries and peoples to whom they owe their clearest expressions in national life and literature.

The least developed of these three forms of Theism, that which represents the lowest stage of religious culture and is therefore perhaps the first to commend itself to the human intellect, is what has received the name of 'Greek Theism.' We shall speak of it in the expressive and well-chosen words of that eminent thinker and writer, the late Professor F. W. Newman, who was also a distinguished Greek scholar. In his excellent work entitled *Hebrew Theism*, he says :

"Said wise men among the Greeks, God is Intellect ;  
 God has no passions nor emotions nor desires,  
 Nor loves nor hatreds, nor sentiment moral or  
immoral ;  
 But he abides apart in his infinitude, solitary and  
eternal,  
 Responding not to man's affections, and deaf to his  
cry." (P. 22).

In another part of the same work, in which the author calls this type by the not very apt name of 'Pantheim,' he says :

“But others, while believing the Creative Spirit to be moral ;  
So as to design that man shall be perfected through virtue ;  
Yet suppose him too great to pay attention to individuals ;  
Or to care for the destruction of any one man’s virtue.” (P. 76).

The above description applies to the current Theism of the Greeks, so far as there was Theism amongst them. That of the more spiritually minded among them must have been of a somewhat deeper kind. As the same eminent writer we have already quoted says in his beautiful book on *The Soul*: "It is evident that individuals in Greece, in the third century before the Christian era, were already moving towards an intelligent heart-worship, or had even begun to practise it. The most eminent extant proof of this is in the beautiful hymn of Cleanthus to Jupiter. Even in old Herodotus we see the cordial response of his conscience to the sentiment which he emphatically approves,—that the gods hate and punish the desire of sin as itself a sin: and this is the germ of spirituality." From the hymn referred to, a literal translation of which is appended by Professor Newman to the third chapter of his above-named work, we subjoin two extracts:—

Nor upon earth is any work done without Thee,  
O Spirit !

Nor at the ether's utmost height divine, nor in  
the ocean.

Save whatsoe'er the infatuate work out from  
 hearts of evil.

But thou by wisdom knowest well to render all  
 things even ;

Thou orderest Disorder, and th' unlovely lovely  
 makest

\*            \*            \*            \*

But Jove all bounteous ! who in clouds enwrapt,  
 the lightning wieldest ;

Mayest thou from baneful ignorance the race of men  
 deliver !

This, Father ! scatter from the soul, and grant that we  
 the wisdom

May reach, in confidence of which thou justly guidest  
 all things ;

That we, by thee in honour set, with honour may  
 repay thee,

Raising to all thy works a hymn perpetual ; as be-  
 seemeth

A mortal soul : since neither man nor god has  
 higher glory,

Than rightfully to celebrate Eternal Law all-ruling.

A third and more developed form of Greek Theism is what is known as Neo-platonism, a doctrine that flourished in the centuries immediately preceding and following the rise of Christianity. This doctrine arose from a fusion of Greek and Oriental thought, and it partly determined the form which Christianity, originally a purely Jewish doctrine, finally assumed in Europe. In its purer form, it bears such a striking resemblance to



Hindu Theism, that one can scarcely resist the conclusion that it had its origin in the influence exerted by Hindu thought by some agency or other—possibly by Buddhist missionaries from India—on Greek or rather Grecio-Hebrew thought in Alexandria and other centres of eclectic-thought in those times. Neo-platonism, therefore, represents more of Hindu or Oriental thought than the typical speculative tendency of the Greeks. And after all, with all its inwardness and meditative profundity, Neo-platonism represents little of that singular combination of deep wisdom and tender emotion which is characteristic of Hindu Theism.

The second stage of religious progress is represented by the religion of the ancient Hebrews and the two more modern systems of religion, Christianity and Muhammadanism, that are based on that ancient faith. Hebrew Theism, in all its phases, is characterized by a deep ethical fervour. Its God is a God of perfect righteousness, and he demands righteousness from his worshippers. The spirit of Hebrew Theism finds its highest manifestation in the words of its most illustrious exponent,—“By ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Very aptly has the same great authority summed up the Law and the Prophets in the two commandments,—“Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy will; and Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” These characteristics of Hebrew Theism are undoubtedly eternal elements, elements calculated to lift up all

individuals and nations by which they may be received. But intermixed with these are other elements implying a shallowness of spiritual insight,—elements which centuries of spiritual and intellectual progress have not been able to eliminate. The God of Hebrew Theism is, notwithstanding his many perfections, a jealous God,—distributing rewards and punishments in return for holiness and sin not so much because they are good for his worshippers, as because virtue and vice represent personal honour and dishonour to his majesty. Man also suffers injustice at the hands of the typical Hebrew as either wilfully rebellious against God, whom he pictures as a Being imposing an external authority upon the will of man, or as bowing down to this external authority in consideration of an equally external reward. This anthropomorphic idea of God's dealings with man,—an idea with which even the most advanced systems of Christian Thought, not to speak of other less enlightened creeds, are suffused, and from which only a few isolated seers are free,—is due to the absence of a proper insight into the fundamental unity of God and man,—of a true idea of the omnipresence and infinitude of God. Hence also, most Hebrew types of faith labour under the idea of a God more or less distant,—one who is the object of mere faith, and not one that can be discerned by direct insight as the very basis of life and thought. The absence of a deeply meditative spirit also issues in crude notions of the relation of God to Nature, in an absolute distinction of matter and spirit—and thus places a number of intermediate

agencies between God and man. The doctrine of the Logos, which Christianity borrowed from Greek thought, and which might partly have modified the above defects, has been spoilt and narrowed by most Christians, so that, instead of the perpetual manifestation of God in Nature and Spirit, we have, in the current Christian doctrine of the Trinity, the supernatural and miraculous incarnation of the Divine Being in a single man, who, therefore, stands as the perpetual mediator between the worshipper and the worshipped.

Hindu Theism, which represents the third and highest stage of spiritual development, is distinguished from the two types mentioned by the following characteristics. First of all, it is a religion of direct knowledge, while the other systems build more or less on the external authority of prophets and scriptures. While Greek Theism is contented with a mere inferential knowledge of God, which can be no true knowledge at all; while Hebrew Theism, though holding forth the promise that the pure in heart shall see God, nullifies this promise by its hard and fast Dualism and its doctrine of mediation,—the Theism of the *Upanishads* is never tired of saying that God can be seen by every one who diligently seeks him. And how could it be otherwise with a Being who is, as these inspired writings tell us, the very power and director of our senses, the very basis of our conscious life? The blind worship of the letter of the Vedas, is an after-growth, and is not due to the teachings of the founders of our religion. That the more eminent of their commentators and expounders

were also not subject to it, we shall show by and by.

Following from the characteristic of directness in divine knowledge, is the principle of immediacy in matters of spiritual culture. As there is no Moses or Jesus, Paul or Muhammad in Hindu Theism through whom we must know God, so, in the gradual progress of the soul, and in the final union with God sought by it, there is no need of meditation by any such agencies, however great may be the help that we receive from them and others like them. The impersonality and unhistoricalness of our religion—the absence of any prominent human centre round which the devotion of the nation gathers—has often been noticed and regretted by followers of other religions. It is, in fact, a glory of our national creed. No one knows who wrote the *Upanishads*, and no one cares to know. What should we gain by knowing it? The evidence of their credibility—of the substantial truth of the religion taught by them—is not external, not based on the history of the particular persons who composed them. It is internal. We believe them to be true because we apprehend them to be true. They awaken our powers of spiritual apprehension, they turn our eyes inward and tell us to see our God for ourselves. They leave us face to face with the Universal Soul, and their function ceases. Hindu Theism is pre-eminently a religion of spiritual freedom.

The most prominent characteristic of Hindu Theism is the perfect vision of the Divine infinitude on which it is based. All other religions sin against the Divine infinitude by imagining a material world and an infinite

number of finite souls as existing more or less independently of God. Hindu Theism sees, with a depth of insight which is exclusively its own, that the subject and the object, the finite and the infinite, are inseparable, and that the absolute Reality is and cannot but be one and indivisible. This underlying Monism distinguishes Hindu Theism from all other systems of religion. There have been isolated individuals in other countries who have thought themselves into this doctrine in their search after truth; but of no national religion—of no religion that has affected large communities of men—can it be said that they are based on a doctrine of such speculative depth, one which unifies and reconciles the widest differences and furnishes a key to the solution of the most abstruse problems of religion and philosophy.

The Monism underlying Hindu Theism is not a mere philosophical creed. It is the basis of Hindu ethical and spiritual culture. The universal love which our highest scriptures inculcate, the precept to regard every creature as one's self, is based on the doctrine of the fundamental unity of all existence,—the doctrine that the same great Soul lies at the basis of all conscious life. The ideal before the Hindu Theist is not, as is sometimes erroneously supposed, the mere intellectual contemplation of his own unity with the Supreme Soul, but a practical realization of unity with the Universe in feeling and practice also. To think, feel and act as if—as is really the case—I were the universe,—with the consciousness that my true self is not my body, nor any other finite object, however fine, but the whole world—

all conscious existence—this is the grand ideal which the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgita* set up before their followers—an ideal which guides the practical conduct and devotional exercises of all true Hindu Theists. This ideal clearly distinguishes our national Theism from all other types of Theism.

Though a system of Monism, Hindu Theism is not monistic to an extent which would make spiritual discipline impossible. The elaborate scheme of ethical and devotional exercises prescribed in our scriptures imply a relative duality between the finite and the infinite soul. The unity insisted upon is not an abstract, colourless unity, but a unity-in-difference. The repositories of our faith clearly distinguish between the two aspects of the Divine nature—the eternal and unchangeable Divine *essence* transcending all finite existence, and the Divine *power* which perpetually manifests itself in numberless finite objects of which the finite individuality of man is the highest. That this individuality, though finally purged of all impure egotism by spiritual culture, persists even in the highest stage of spiritual progress,—that a relative duality of the worshipper and the worshipped is present even in those forms in which the consciousness of unity manifests itself—for example, in *Tat tam asi* (Thou art It) and *Aham Brahma asmi* (I am Brahma) is, as we conceive, the doctrine of the highest authorities on our religion. What this unity-in-difference really means, we shall have occasion to show as we proceed. Suffice it to say here, that this doctrine of unity-in-difference, a doctrine which recognises the fundamental

unity of all existence, and yet does not lose sight of the difference involved in man's ethical and spiritual endeavours, is a peculiar characteristic of Hindu Theism and can be found in no other type of religion, not at any rate, in that depth and variety of expression which characterizes our sacred literature.

We have already mentioned what the historical foundations of Hindu Theism are. They are, first, the *Upanishads*, the later or gnostic portions of the Vedas, portions which,—unlike the other portions, which deal with sacrifices to numerous gods and goddesses and in which the recognition of the Divine unity is dim,—teach the worship and contemplation of the Infinite Soul. The *Upanishads* continue to recognise the existence of the gods, and some of them even inculcate their worship as a sort of lower discipline,—just as Christianity and other forms of Hebrew Theism recognise the existence and beneficent agency of angels, and sometimes even inculcate the offering of prayers and vows to them. But the supreme object of worship in the *Upanishads*, the highest goal to which the worshipper is directed, is the Infinite Spirit, of which the gods are sometimes represented as mere names, and sometimes as finite manifestations, as all objects really are. The *Upanishads* then, which have been held in the deepest esteem by our nation from time immemorial, are the highest authorities on Hindu Theism. They, and they alone,—we may mention by the way,—are the true *Vedanta* or *Vedantas*, the *Vedanta-Srutis*. Others works wrongly or conventionally called by the same name are only expositions of

the true *Vedanta* and should be distinguished by the name 'Vedanta-Darshana' or 'Vedanta-Vyākḥā.' All works bearing the name *Upanishads* are not, however, real parts of the Vedas, and are, by no means, equally honoured by the nation. Without entering into a detailed discussion on the subject, we may just mention that the *Upanishads* universally honoured, and those to which the Vedanta aphorisms appeal, are the well-known twelve, *Isā, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Māndukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chhandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Kausitaki* and *Svetasvatara*. Next in authority to the *Upanishads* or *Vedanta-Srutis* are the aphorisms just mentioned, and variously called the *Vedanta Sutras*, the *Brahma Sutras*, the *Sariraka Sutras*, the *Uttara Mimansa* &c. They are honoured as representing the earliest known attempt to systematise and expound the Theology of the *Upanishads*, and have, like the *Upanishads* themselves, been variously expounded by commentators belonging to different schools. The same, and perhaps a much more universal honour is paid by Hindu Theists of all classes to the *Bhagavadgita*, not inaptly compared to milk, while the *Upanishads* are likened to cows. An admixture of Puranic myth, in this valuable work, with the pure Theism of the *Upanishads*, sometimes causes it to serve, at the hands of misguided sectaries, purposes quite opposed to the profound religion taught by it; but read in the light of the original sources of our faith, it is felt to deserve all the honour that is paid to it both by our countrymen and foreigners. In certain respects, it represents a real de-



velopment of the ancient Theism of the Vedic writings. However, these three works, (1) the twelve *Upanishads* taken collectively, the *Vedānta Sūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, have, for centuries, formed the canon of the higher religion of the country, and have been adopted, commented upon and variously interpreted by all important schools of Hindu thought. We, moderns, cannot do anything better than draw inspiration, in a free yet reverent spirit, from the same pure sources and wield the same honoured weapons in our struggles with error and ungodliness.

But in speaking the above three works, called briefly the *Prasthānatrayam*, as the canon of Hindu Theism, we by no means wish it to be understood that the last words of higher wisdom have been said in them. The book of inspiration is not, and can never be, closed. The Hindu nation has not been spiritually idle since the *Prasthānatrayam* was composed, but has put forth its inward experiences in the form of numberless treatises of varying bulk and worth. In some of them the principles enunciated in the original canon have been considerably elaborated, whereas in others they have been all but choked by an after-growth of superstition, ritualism and priest-craft. A third class, again, present a strange mixture of things healthy and unhealthy. Great care, therefore, is needed in using these later products of Hindu spiritual life, and though we should receive all the help they may lend us, we should consider them as parts of our canon only so far as they keep up the fire that burns in the original records and lead us on through

the same straight paths that are laid down in them. In this sense, the various commentaries on the *Prasthāna-trayam*, the numerous treatises in which the fundamental ideas contained in them are expounded, the higher *Puranas* and *Tantras*, which, notwithstanding much that is unhealthy in them, teach, in the main, the pure and ancient religion of Brahma, and though last, by no means the least,—the works of such eminent Hindu Theists of the present age as Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Maharshi Devendranath Thakur and Brahmananda Kesav Chandra Sen, are parts of our sacred literature, and deserve to be studied in a free, devout and reverent spirit.

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## AUTHORITY AND FREE THOUGHT IN RELIGION.

### I.

THOUGHT is not really so free as the ordinary free-thinker conceives it to be. We cannot entirely break asunder the threads that bind our thoughts to the thought of the past. Whether we wish it or not, we think in lines laid down for us and not laid out by our own free choice. The ideas with which we are born,—or, if, with a certain class of philosophers, you say that ideas are not innate,—the tendencies of thought with which we come into the world and which form the basis of our mental life, are inherited from thinking ancestors. They are the result of their ways of thinking, of their intellectual and moral experience. These tendencies,—which lead us necessarily to think, feel and will in certain ways,—rule us with an iron sway. We cannot but follow them. And it is well that they do so. Without them, our minds—if one could think of ‘minds’ without such tendencies,—would be perfectly blank, and no experience would be possible for us, however favourable the field might be. An empty egg could not be hatched into a fowl, however careful the hatching might be. And it is well that mental experience is not confined to individual life,—that it has the capacity of perpetuating and communicating itself endlessly. It is this fact of spiritual heredity that constitutes the advantages of being born in an advanced race and an advanced family. A Bengali and a

Sonthal child are not born equal, and cannot be made equal by education. The one inherits a rich store of intellectual and spiritual experience which helps him at every turn in his growth in life; the other is born with a poor inheritance, and has to struggle hard and proceed slowly. Ideas, therefore, are not, in a sense, ours; they are an inheritance,—they are derived from an authority to which every mind, however free it may suppose itself to be, is subject.

The history of ideas, the gradual development or manifestation of thought under conditions laid down not by us but for us, constitutes this authority. If you attempt to trace this history to its beginning, you will see it has no beginning. Your imagination may quickly carry you to what may seem to be the beginning of the world, but that beginning is really the beginning of a cycle and not of the world. It is not the beginning of existence. And the beginning of one cycle is the end of another. You cannot think an absolute beginning, nor an absolute end. But perhaps it will seem that in the beginning of a cycle, there is no thought, so that, though existence may have no beginning, thought would seem to have one. But these are mere idle fancies. You cannot think of existence without thought, and the derivation of thought from anything which is not thought is impossible. Thought is the *præ* of all existence, and is eternal, uncreate. The history of the gradual manifestation of thought to created beings, is the eternal, unwritten scripture that guides all individual thought, that even of the freest free-thinker. This is the esoteric,

the philosophical explanation of the doctrine that the Vedas are *apaurusheya*, without a personal writer. In this sense, the 'Vedas' means the eternal stock of ideas that partially manifest themselves to all thinking beings, form the basis of their mental life, and revealing themselves to specially gifted beings in unusual richness and fulness, constitute bodies of national tradition, and become objects of veneration and careful study. On this subject, the reader who possesses the needful leisure and preparation, may consult what the great Sankara says in his commentary on aphorisms 25 to 33 of the third pada, first chapter, of the *Vedanta Sūtras*.

Is there no freedom then? Is all thought bound by the iron chains of authority? Cannot the individual rise above his history, his surroundings, by any means? And, if he can so rise, what is the extent to which this is possible? Freedom, we reply, is as real as authority, but the former proceeds upon and is made possible by the latter. An individual is not merely the result of other individuals, of those that have gone before him. In every individual there is something original which cannot be explained by a mere reference to his past history—to his natural and spiritual ancestry. Every individual indeed comes with a fund of inheritance, but he also adds something to that fund. This addition constitutes his originality. The condition, however, of this addition is the individual's participation in the treasured experience of his ancestors. This participation forms the ground, as it were, on which the individual stands, as well as the strength that enables him to work in the field of experi-

ence which opens before him on his coming into the world. To every individual Nature unfolds a realm of thought which she invites him to conquer and take possession of. It is, at his birth, an unappropriated treasure to him, and its appropriation is, in a real sense, a new experience to him, an experience that cannot be resolved into things inherited from his ancestors. To bring these things under his mind's sway, constitutes that new experience. In this experience, his progress may be much greater than his ancestors, both quantitatively and qualitatively. He may know many things more than they did, and know them more correctly than they. There may be evolved in him a set of emotions and activities not experienced by them, and these may be much higher and better than theirs, carrying him much nearer than they to the goal that Reason sets before the human mind. There is thus a wide field left for the free play of thought. The mind of man is not necessarily tied down to the errors and foibles of his fathers. He is meant for progress, and progress implies freedom. But this freedom, as we have already pointed out, is based on due subjection to authority. Progress is determined by the extent to which, and the way in which the treasured experience of the past has been utilised and assimilated. He who has not learnt what the past has to teach him, strives in vain to leave the past behind. He must serve his apprenticeship in full before he is enabled to strike out a new line for himself. It is only by obtaining a full possession of the treasures that the experience of the past has left for us,—only by patiently learning the lesson it

has to teach—that we can rise above it and see things which it did not see, and do things it did not do.

## II.

We do not know how far the present movement for a revival of the national religion has been successful in restoring the old belief in supernatural revelation. It is not likely that, notwithstanding partial success in certain quarters, such an attempt will ever be crowned with general and permanent success. The times are against it. The progress already made in Science and Philosophy is against it. Science indeed is not without its dogmatism. Science is not always strictly scientific. It often presumes to deny whatever it has not been able to bring under its sway. It is however becoming more and more reverent. It now shows a greater and greater readiness every day to recognise a sphere of reality beyond that over which it reigns. But it is strictly within its limits to reject the supernatural explanation of anything that can be explained naturally. When anything can be clearly traced to the ascertained laws of nature and mind, it is simply preposterous to refer it to a supernatural source. The revelation of spiritual truth and its embodiment in national tradition and literature is such a thing. It can be explained by the ascertained laws of human nature. It can be traced to the natural insight of the human mind into truth relating to that which surrounds it and that which underlies it, to the laws of reasoning implied in its very constitution, and to the self-preserving instinct that leads it to conserve everything

that is agreeable and beneficial to it. All this explains religion and the literature it has given rise to here and elsewhere. The knowledge of God, like the knowledge of Nature, is a perfectly natural thing. The one is not more strange than the other. The mind of man is not a whit less intimately connected with the Supreme Mind in which it is contained, than Nature, the sphere of its experience. This natural explanation of religion and its literature being quite sufficient, there is no need to seek a supernatural explanation of these phenomena. Such an explanation is sure to be discredited more and more as the natural explanation is felt to be perfectly reliable. And its reliability is confirmed more and more by our daily spiritual experience. As we grow in spirit, we feel more and more how natural a thing it is to know God. It needs no supernatural revelation to tell us that Nature and man have a Divine Author, and that he is good to us and wants us to be good. And, even if common sense is competent to know this, Metaphysics, backed by spiritual experience, has been for centuries rearing a structure of religious philosophy which draws more and more day by day the admiration of reverent and thinking men. As this philosophy grows in depth and breadth, as it takes in a greater and greater number of spiritual phenomena within its scope and explains them with increasing clearness, the faith that men put in supernatural revelation in the childhood of their intellectual life, wanes more and more. And, as religion is seen more and more to be a natural thing, it ceases to be looked upon as something exceptional.



The idea that religion is supernaturally revealed, is allied to the belief that absolute and unmixed truth, unattainable in other spheres, can be obtained in regard to the objects of religion. The defects of the human intellect, its liability to error, so evident in other departments of knowledge, are supposed to have no influence on religious ideas obtained through inspiration. The divine influx is supposed to counteract this influence and communicate unmixed truth to the human mind, though otherwise fallible. With the loss of man's faith in supernaturalism, this exceptionalness of religious inspiration as an infallible medium of truth also begins to be discredited, and it is seen that the attainment of spiritual truth is subject to conditions similar to those that obtain in other spheres of knowledge. When the conditions are favourable, spiritual truth reveals itself to the human mind as clearly as the truths of natural science. When they are unfavourable, the one is as liable to be mixed up with untruth as the other. If so, if even the products of religious inspiration are thus liable to be mixed up with error, the literature which embodies them, the Sastras, —though we very naturally and reasonably esteem them over all other literature because of their embodying thoughts and ideas on the highest subjects with which the human mind is concerned,—can lay no claim superior to other literature on the score of infallibility. They are likely to be as fallible as other products of the human mind, and as infallible as some of them, according as the minds out of which they come subject themselves with more or less care to the conditions of attaining truth.

Hence also the value of the Sastras differ according as they embody the experiences of practised seers and devotees, or of comparatively thoughtless and impulsive enthusiasts. It is only the ignorant and the thoughtless, to whom all Sastras;—and by Sastras they mean almost all works on religion written in the Sanskrit language—are of equal value. The learned and thoughtful leaders of our society have always recognised a clear distinction among the Sastras according to their relative worth. Their valuation may not have been always correct, but the recognition of a distinction among works all believed to be more or less inspired, is itself remarkable. The distinction between *Sruti* and *Smriti* is well known. This line of demarcation separates Vedic works from all other classes of works. The *Srutis* are incomparably superior to the *Smritis*, and where these two classes of writings conflict, the authority of the former is to be accepted. But the *Sruti* itself, though professedly infallible, was far from being practically accepted as such. There is, first, the accepted distinction between the *Karmakāṇḍa* and the *Jñānakāṇḍa*, the former represented by the *Saṁhitas* and *Brāhmaṇas* and the latter by the *Upanishads*. • The *Jñānakāṇḍa* is decidedly superior to the *Karmakāṇḍa*, and from the standpoint of the former most of the rites and ceremonies inculcated in the latter are absolutely valueless, and even the motives to which it appeals are low, and must be given up as obstructions to the attainment of the highest beatitude. And then, in the *Jñānakāṇḍa* itself, there is a good deal which is quietly laid aside as mere *arthavāda*, that is, non-essential

utterances on things, not intimately connected with the main object at which the *Upanishads* aim. It will thus be seen, that though the accepted teachers and leaders of the national church never say in so many words that the scriptures are fallible, they, by no means, accept them practically as infallible. The scriptures, therefore, should be studied with a free and unbiased mind. They should be handled in the same liberal and yet reverent manner as we handle all other good and beneficial literature,—with minds ready to accept their truths as well as reject their errors. We should always remember that the same Supreme Intelligence that inspired their writers, are with us too, their readers, ever ready to help us in understanding them, and lead us to truth. The book of revelation is not closed, for the same Spirit that revealed truth to ancient seers may do the same to us, and may even make us see things which they did not see, and interpret things aright which they interpreted wrongly. 37294

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## THE THEOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS.

The writers of the *Upanishads* seem to have clearly seen the distinction between dogmatic and rational Theism,—the Theism that is based on mere traditional or instinctive belief, and the higher faith that comes out of insight and deep reflection on the nature of the world and of the soul. Having seen this distinction, they could not but further see that the passage from the one to the other was not an easy one. Every one that professed to be a believer and worshipper of God and felt a curiosity to know God, could not be admitted into the privileges of a theological student. Notwithstanding his belief and inquisitiveness, he might not possess the moral and spiritual attainments necessary for a successful student. His mind might be too restless and too much taken up with things external to be able to fix itself upon super-sensuous realities, and if, by mere dint of intellectual concentration, he succeeded in understanding the nature of the Deity, his heart, unless purified and warmed by devotional exercises, would fail to establish itself in God, and would not thus truly find him. Our Theologians, therefore, insisted upon their pupils going through a long course of moral and spiritual exercise before they were admitted as regular students of the science of God. In the *Prashnopanishad*, we find the Rishi Pipalâda sending away six inquirers after God,—inquirers who are described as worshippers of God,—sending away even such men, for another year of disciplinary exercises before undertaking their regular instruction. In the *Chhândogya*

*Upanishad*, Satyakâma Jâbala is turned out to tend his teacher's cattle, which not only tests his theological ardour and teaches him to be dutiful and obedient under the most trying circumstances, but further brings him into direct contact with Nature, and gives him special opportunities for cultivating habits of solitary reflection so essential to the knowledge of things divine, so that, after his long and rigorous course of apprenticeship, he is enabled to know God with only a little help from his master. In the *Kathopanishad*, Mrityu consents to instruct Nachiketâ in the mysteries of the soul only when, after offering him all the attractions of his divine palace, including all that men value most, he saw that the young man was insensible to them, and would not be satisfied by anything else than the knowledge he sought. The same *Upanishad* says:—"He who has not given up bad habits, whose mind is not tranquil and used to spiritual concentration, cannot find him (*i. e.* God) even by knowledge" (II. 24,) showing that knowledge, which is so essential to the finding of God, is not in itself sufficient to lead to him. We need not multiply instances. The following quotation indicates briefly how very difficult the rishis considered the passage from the religion of mere belief to that of philosophical or spiritual insight to be:—"Arise, awake, seek competent instructors and try to know God. The wise say that that way is as difficult to be passed as the sharp edge of a razor." (*Katha*, III. 14).

Once admitted into the privileged circle of Theistic inquirers, the pupil must have been made to go through prescribed courses of meditation and reasoning. What

the lines of thought were which he followed in his attempt to reach rational or philosophical Theism, it is scarcely possible for us to discover with any amount of certainty. The instruction imparted must have been largely, if not exclusively, oral. The art of writing, even if introduced at all, must have been in its infancy, so that no records, properly so called, remain of the teachings of those who founded the philosophy of the *Upanishads*. The *Upanishads*, however, are not systematic treatises on Philosophy. They contain, like the Bible and other ancient scriptures, exhortations on ethical and spiritual life, anecdotes, stories, poetry, psychology and devout utterances which are as often poetical as philosophical. But notwithstanding their unsystematic character, they contain the elements of a system,—a profound and magnificent system of Philosophy. Being the product of various authors and even of different ages, they are not free from contradictions even on important matters, though the philosophical reader, accustomed to tentative expressions of apparently conflicting but really complementary aspects of the same truth in philosophical literature, will find fewer contradictions in them than the ordinary reader. Though, however, a strictly self-consistent system can no more be gathered from the *Upanishads* than from any body of "sacred books," a general current of thought towards certain philosophical doctrines may clearly be traced in them. This general current of thought in the writers of the *Upanishads* is all that we mean by the "philosophy of the *Upanishads*." However, though, as we have already observed, we have no proper record of the

lines of thought which our old Theistic thinkers followed in reaching their conclusions, the conclusions themselves, and often the language in which they are clothed, indicate, with sufficient clearness, the method adopted by them. There are, besides, here and there, passages containing more or less luminous philosophical analyses which throw much light on the logical processes through which the minds of the rishis moved. Gathering these scattered fragments of light, we shall give a rough idea of the theistic philosophy of the *Upanishads*.

On the subject of the relation of mind and matter, all indications lead us to conclude that the writers of the *Upanishads* were Idealists. To them, as much as to Berkeley and Malebranche, Fichte and Hegel, and their followers, the world is through and through a mental construction. Whether manifested or unmanifested, it rests in mind. Objects, to them, as to the European Idealist, are essentially related to knowledge, and can therefore exist only in knowledge. The *Aitareya* enumerates the various classes of objects, animate and inanimate, including even the highest gods, and says,—“All is produced by Reason and rests in Reason. The world is produced by Reason and rests in Reason, and Reason is Brahman.” (III. 3). The *Katha* says,—“In him rest all worlds, and none are apart from him.” (VI. 1). The *Prasna* says,—“As, my dear, birds rest on trees, so all rests in the Supreme Self.” (IV. 7). These and innumerable other passages of similar import can be explained only in the light of Idealism. What can the resting of all things in the Supreme Mind mean but the correlation of subject

and object. The rishis must have seen that objects, with all other qualities, appear to mind, to knowledge, and that they can be believed in and thought of only in relation to mind. As the *Mundaka* says,—“In whom, the luminous one, all things rest and shine,” (III. 2. 1), and elsewhere,—“Him, the shining one, all things shine after; all shine through his light.” (II. 2. 10).

Such utterances may seem to some to indicate a Being whose existence is inferred from the indications of law and order in the world, a Being whose relation to Nature cannot be explained by the familiar relation of subject and object, and who, if he is directly cognisable at all, is so only in supreme moments of mystical insight. But the authors of the *Upanishads*, unlike the Natural Theologians of Europe, made little use of the Design Argument. The Reason in which they saw the world shine is not one of which they had any need to go in search of by the aid of ingeniously constructed arguments. They found it in themselves. It is identical with what every one calls his own Reason, his own Self. It is that which is the subject of knowledge in us,—that in relation to which all objects appear and exist for us. Let us hear how the *Kenopanishad* distinguishes subject and object and identifies God with the former :—

“That which is not manifested by speech, but by which speech is manifested,—know that to be Brahman, and not this which people worship, *i.e.*, not anything that belongs to the world of objects. That which people do not think with the *manas* (*i.e.*, with the faculty of forming mental images of things), but that by which the *manas*



itself is thought, (*i.e.*, made an object,) know that to be Brahman, and not what people worship. That which people do not see with the eye, but that by which people see visual objects,—know that to be Brahman, and not what people worship. That which people do not hear with the ear, but by which the ear is heard, (*i.e.*, made an object),—know that to be Brahman, and not what people worship. That which people do not smell, but by which the power of smelling is led to its object,—know that to be Brahman, and not to what people worship." (I. 4—8).

But by identifying Brahman with the subject or self in each person, do not the *Upanishads* make him limited and plural? They would indeed do so if by the 'Self' they meant anything that is, in its very nature, individual, particular. But by 'Self' the *Upanishads* do not mean any such thing. They mean, by it, something that is, in its very nature, universal, that is common to all thinking individuals, the common basis of all objects, animate and inanimate,—of thinking persons themselves considered as particular objects. Thus *Katha*, in a deeply suggestive passage (III. 10, 11), says that objects are greater than the senses, and the *manas* greater than objects, the intellect greater than the *manas*, and the soul greater than the intellect; the invisible power that produces the world of time and space is greater than the soul, and the Supreme Person, greater than that power, and that there is nothing greater than the Supreme Person, who is our ultimate goal. At each step of this analysis, the rishi names a category which comprehends the lower categories, till he comes to the highest category,

the Supreme Self, which transcends not only the sensorium and the intellect, where time and space end, but also that centre of spiritual activity to which, as a substance, intellect itself is referred as a mode or attribute. By the Supreme Person or Self therefore, the *Upanishads* mean something that transcends time, space and quantity, which belongs not only to me, a particular centre of spiritual activity, but to all such centres. As the same *Upanishad* says,—“What is here is there ; what is there is here. He who sees plurality in this goes from death to death.” (IV. 6). This is made much more clear in the dialogue between Nārada and Sanatkumāra in the *Chhândogya Upanishad*. Sanatkumara enumerates a number of categories, coming to a higher one at each step as Nārada feels dissatisfied with each last, and at last he comes to Prāna. Nārada seems satisfied, as he cannot think of a higher category than life, with the departure of which every activity in us ceases. But Sanatkumāra leads him to the highest category, where alone final satisfaction can be obtained, and that is the Infinite (Bhumá). But Nārada, like all minds in which the highest enlightenment has not dawned, asks, “Where doth the Infinite abide, O Lord”? just as we ask, “Where is the Self”? or say, “The Self is here,” thus making space a higher category than Self. Sanatkumāra at first says, “The Infinite abideth in its own glory,” but as if in anticipation of Nārada’s question, “Where is that glory”? Sanatkumara withdraws even this seeming limitation of the Infinite and says, “It doth not abide in its glory.” This Infinite, which comprehends all space and so cannot be anywhere

in particular, is then identified with the Self, and the infinitude of the Self described in the words—"Verily I extend from below, I extend from above, I extend from behind, I extend from before, I extend from the South, I extend from the North. Of a truth I am all this." It is then said that all the categories or objects enumerated above are products of the Self.

No demonstration, in the ordinary sense of the term, is offered of this apparently startling position that the Self in us—that which makes us knowing, thinking beings,—is infinite and one in all. This may be partly due to the rishis not being perfect masters of the art of exposition, but it seems also, in part, due to the fact that the truth appeared to them too plain to require any formal demonstration. To us it seems that when one has brought to a focus all the scattered rays of light, the rishis have thrown on the problem, it strikes one as a real demonstration, if 'demonstration' is the word for the revelation of a truth which forms the background of all knowledge, all thinking, all demonstration. In thinking of objects, we necessarily think of a subject. In knowing and thinking of the limitations of objects, even of mutually exclusive thinking objects or minds, we necessarily do so from the standpoint of a subject which transcends all limitations,—we do so only by identifying ourselves with a Universal which, since it is the condition of knowing and thinking limits, cannot itself be limited. In other words, it is not any individual,—any particular centre of spiritual activity as distinguished from other centres,—that knows and thinks limits as such,

but the Infinite itself that does so ; and in as much as the Infinite thinks my thoughts for me, I am one with it.

But if this is the view of the relation of Brahman and Jiva taken by the *Upanishads*, if Jiva is one with Brahman, how is it that these very writings inculcate the worship of God on the part of man, and teach man to seek salvation through union with God ? If the union is already real, what is there for us to aspire after ? The answer to this question, from the standpoint of the *Upanishads*, is that Jiva as worshipper, as seeking deliverance, is not the same as Brahman. Jiva as worshipper, is identified not with the universal subject which is the condition of all thought and action, but with one of the many objects dependent upon that subject. Leaving apart the grosser objects,—matter, life and sensorium, with which, in the lower stages of his spiritual life, man identifies himself, his identification with the understanding, or a substance conceived of as the seat of the understanding, may be said to be, in a sense, final. In the highest stage of his spiritual life, he indeed realises the truth both theoretically and practically, that his true self is the Infinite. But even this realisation of ultimate unity with the Infinite implies a sort of duality, for, though the unity itself is eternal, the realization of it on the part of the worshipper is an event in time and thus belongs to a finite being. We are prepared to prove from quotations from the *Upanishads* that this duality of the worshipper and the worshipped will never cease. But there are also passages of a doubtful import in these writings—passages which seem to teach the utter

annihilation of all that is finite and objective. Much depends upon how these passages are interpreted. We think, however, that spiritual experience confirms the interpretation which construes such 'annihilation' into the ideal subsumption of the finite into the infinite, the full consciousness on the part of the finite that in itself it is nothing,—the Infinite is All-in-all.\*

In the essay on "The Self and its Sheaths," we shall further explain the Vedantic idea of the relation of the finite and the Infinite.

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\* See our essay on "Bondage and Deliverance."

## THE SELF AND ITS 'SHEATHS'.

The *Taittiriya Upanishad* speaks of five koshas or sheaths of the Self, viz. the corporeal (annamaya), the vital (prānamaya), the sensorial (manomaya), the conceptual (vijñānamaya) and the blissful (ānandamaya). The *Upanishad* describes each of these 'sheaths', distinguishes one from the other, and says that each latter sheath in the list contains and transcends the former, while the Self which each of them encloses, and in which all rest, is the same. With much that is unintelligible and perhaps poetical, this exposition of the five 'sheaths' enclosing the Self is, in fact, an enumeration of the objects which unenlightened intellect identifies, one after another, with the Absolute Self in its attempt to know its real nature, till this is finally revealed to spiritual vision. This gradual progress in the knowledge of the Absolute is illustrated in the same *Upanishad* by the beautiful story of Bhrigu and Varuna. Bhrigu, instructed by his father Varuna, meditates on the nature of Brahman, and successively identifies it with the five sheaths referred to, till he sees it in its absolute essence. Bhrigu typifies humanity. In its most unenlightened state the human intellect mistakes the body for the real Self, and matter for the Absolute Existence. Everything seems to come out of, rest in, and return to matter, and so long as we do not see anything beyond it, we naturally conclude like Bhrigu in the story,—*Annam Brahma*—matter is the Absolute. But by and by we see something larger, more comprehensive, than matter, some-

thing to which matter itself is subordinate. The Vedānta calls it *Prāna* (life, the vital air,) but gives it everywhere such a wide connotation, that it seems to have occupied the same place in the thoughts of ancient Vedantic thinkers as 'force' does in those of our modern physicists, according to whom both matter and life are its manifestations. While at this stage of thought, Bhrigu, as the representative of scientific thought, concluded—'Force is the Absolute,—*Prāno Brahmeti vyajātnāt*. While we are in this stage, force seems to explain all things internal and external. What we call our 'self' seems to be nothing but a certain quantum of force existing and acting under certain limitations, and on the other hand, all that is outside us seems also to be explicable as the manifestation or effect of a universal but inscrutable Energy. But Bhrigu's *tapasyā* or meditation does not end here. From a physicist he grows into a sensationalist. All things seem to him explicable as sensations,—our individual sensations as the phenomena of our little sensoriums or centres of sensation, and these as well as natural objects and events as trains of sensations in a vast cosmic sensorium. We need hardly say there are not a few modern thinkers whose conclusion tallies with that of Bhrigu—'*Mano Brahma*'—the sensorium is the Absolute. But by and by it is seen that mere sensations unrelated to one another by a unifying thought is a mere abstraction,—that feelings can be real only for an understanding (*vijnānam*) which distinguishes itself from, while it relates itself to them, and in which the knowledge of sensations persists in the form of permanent

ideas while the sensations themselves pass away. The understanding is seen to be the real source of unity, the unities constituted by matter, force and sensation being themselves due to its unifying power. For, an aggregate of material particles, a single force giving rise to a number of phenomena, a sensorium manifesting itself in a train of feelings,—what are these but so many conceptions due to the action of a subject holding together a manifold of objects in the unity of its self-consciousness? But, as commonly conceived, the understanding itself is an object, a plurality. After the analogy of material unities, centres of force, and sentient organisms, we conceive of conceptual unities, of individual egos constituting their own mental worlds by the unity of their self-consciousness. In doing so, however, we forget the real nature of the understanding,—the real meaning of the necessity that impels us to refer objects to a subject. In referring objects to a subject, we refer things relative to something absolute, something which exists for itself and not for anything else. It is not to a point in space, an event in time or to an aggregate of feelings and ideas that we refer objects,—for every one of these carry with it the idea of relativity, of limitation, of being an object to another, but to something the very essence of which consists in being an object unto itself, being absolute and therefore unlimited by anything else. When, therefore, the subject itself is conceived as limited in time and space, and by other subjects, the real meaning of the distinction of subject and object is forgotten. The subject, in its entire reality, cannot but



be absolutely one and infinite. A finite, individual subject, therefore, with many other individuals co-ordinate to it, can mean only a certain reflection or reproduction of the one, undivided, universal Subject in connexion with a certain aggregate of thoughts and feelings. In such a conception of the Absolute Subject as 'reflected' in, and so far identified with a certain aggregate of ideas, the individuality or finiteness attaches, it will be seen, not to the Subject itself, which illumines this as well as every other aggregate, but to the particular aggregate with which it is identified. The real Subject to which thought, out of an internal necessity, refers all objects internal and external, is, by the same necessity, thought of as one, undivided, all-comprehending. When this necessary unity of thought is discerned, when the universe is seen to be relative to an all-uniting, all-comprehending Understanding on which its very possibility as an object depends,—which makes and sustains it by the ceaseless activity of its thought,—the Absolute is identified with the Understanding. And so Bhrigu, while at this stage of his progress, concluded, as the representative of metaphysical thought,—'the Understanding is the Absolute.' *Vīṇānam Brahmeti vyajānti.*

In reaching the Understanding, the support and unifier of all objects, we may seem to have reached, not a relative something, but the Absolute Essence itself. But the Vedānta is not satisfied even here. To it the Understanding, as such, is not quite, though very nearly, the real Absolute, and so it represents it as the fourth 'sheath.' The reason is this. There is a certain dual-

ity attached to the very essence of the understanding which is inconsistent with the perfect unity of the Absolute. The Understanding, while it unifies, also distinguishes. Distinction enters as much into its essence as unification. In the very act of making objects possible by its relation to them, the Understanding distinguishes itself from them. It seems to say—'These are my *objects*, I am not they.' Now, is this distinction ultimate, absolute? Are objects really anything different from the Subject? Are they not the same entity as the Subject, only thought of as different from it? The Vedanta teaches that the Self, which, in the stage of thought or discursive knowledge, makes the distinction of subject and object, really transcends the distinction in that of immediate knowledge. The distinction is not final and absolute: it obtains only in thought, not in immediate knowledge,—in real existence. In *aparokshānubhūti*, direct self-knowledge, subject and object are one. Or, to express the same idea in another form, in absolute existence, there is no distinction of subject and object; the Absolute Reality is above this distinction. Thus the Vedanta relegates the Understanding also to the category of 'sheaths.' According to it, the Understanding is only the power of the Absolute Self to manifest itself in the form of innumerable objects distinct from one another, but all unified by a single Principle,—a Principle which is, in reality, the same as the one Absolute Self, only manifested and reflected in an infinite variety of objects. Now, the immediate perception of the Absolute Unity above all distinction is necessarily accompanied by an

unspeakable beauty. It is the feeling of limitation, of duality, it is the consciousness of things existing beyond one's self,—things that are actual or possible sources of pain to one's self, or are limitations to one's power,—it is this feeling or consciousness that lies at the root of all mortal suffering. When, therefore, in moments of highest devotion, the devotee realizes the one, undivided Absolute as his real Self, his soul is flooded by a joy incomparable to any earthly joy,—to any pleasure that limited objects, however great, may yield. This joy may vary in permanence, and therefore in intensity, according to the self-realizing capacity of the subject that feels it. For instance, if there are spiritually higher orders of beings than man, they must be the recipients of much deeper joy than what we enjoy, and if there be, as Vedantists think there is, a Being in whom understanding exists in the highest form possible,—that is to say, who identifies himself with the whole universe, but in whom the highest unity as explained above is not fully reached,—then the joy that such a being should enjoy in the realization of the Absolute Self must be quite inconceivable to us. The Subject or Understanding as realizing its unity with the Absolute Self, as enjoying the beauty of such self-realization,—is what the Vedanta calls the *anandamayā kosha*, the sheath of beauty. This *ananda* or bliss manifests itself indistinctly in every mortal pleasure, even the lowest; its highest manifestation in the life of man is seen in his moments of direct God-consciousness, and it exists in the highest

form in the Absolute Understanding or Isvara. In the Absolute Unity itself, beatitude exists, not as an object, not as a phenomenon, not as the result of an act or process of self-realization, but as its very essence. The Absolute is essentially and eternally self-realizing, and therefore essentially and eternally blissful. It is *sat*, absolute truth, not relative to anything else; *chit*, absolute self-consciousness, not conscious of anything else, because there is in fact nothing else than itself, everything being itself; and *anandam*, absolute bliss,—eternally enjoying the joy of self-realization. Thus the Absolute, though manifesting itself in the form of the five sheaths, is, in its fulness, beyond the differences that constitute them. It is, as Sankara says, *Panchakosha-vilakshanam*, different from the five sheaths.

We have expounded only the theoretical aspect of the Vedantic doctrine of the Self and its sheaths. The subject has a practical side also, which we have not touched. The realization of the Absolute Self in all the departments of life is an ideal which devotees aspire to reach by various means. To each of the stages of spiritual life described above, there appertain devotional exercises and practical duties peculiar to it. The mere intellectual comprehension of the Absolute Self and its 'sheaths' is a comparatively easy matter, but to rise practically over each of the stages represented by these 'sheaths', and live and move perpetually in the consciousness of the Absolute Self, depends on a long and complex system of culture which few even care to know, far less seriously adopt as a routine of life.

## GOD AS TRANSCENDENT AND IMMANENT.

The writers and interpreters of the Upanishads contemplate God in two ways, as immanent and as transcendent,—as embodied in the various objects of the world, and as beyond these objects. The primary qualities of the objective world, the fundamental elements of which all objects are so many mixtures, are, according to our philosophers, *sattvam*, the principle of manifested intelligence, *rajas*, the principle of attraction, and *tamas*, the principle of darkness. These are the three *gunas*, qualities, into which Hindu philosophy resolves everything objective. Now, God being the one only Reality in the universe, the All-in-all, the *gunas* must be contemplated as nothing but forms in which he manifests himself. As manifesting himself in these forms, then, God is *saguna*, with the *gunas*, qualified, differentiated, embodied in a sense, immanent in Nature. But the Reality that manifests itself in these various forms, shows, by this very act of manifestation, that it has an inner, independent nature apart from its modifications. The modifications come and go, but the Reality persists and brings out fresh phenomena from the inexhaustible source of its inner nature. Again, the phenomena of Nature are objects, and as such, related to a permanent subject that remains unchanged amidst all their changes. Or, if we contemplate subject and object as mutually related, inter-dependent, they imply an Absolute Intelligence in which they are unified, and their distinction resolved. This Absolute Intelligence, by its very function of unit-

ing related objects distinguished from one another, must transcend all relations and distinctions, all *gunas*, all that belong to phenomenal objects. By its very nature, it must be undefinable, indescribable, unspeakable, except in terms of objects and relations which it transcends. Hence our philosophers call it *nirguna*, without the *gunas*, and *nirvishesha*, undifferenced,—transcending all natural objects, gross and fine, and their various relations.

These two aspects of the Divine nature, the *saguna* and the *nirguna*, the immanent and the transcendent, can be understood in both their relative difference and underlying unity by attending to what passes in our individual lives,—in the human mind, which, according to our theologians, is nothing but a reproduction of the Divine mind. The human mind itself has a *saguna* and a *nirguna* aspect. While writing the essay in my hand, while attending to the various objects before me, the paper, the ink, the pen, the lines flowing from it, and the ideas that are being translated into these outward forms,—my mind, my self, the Reality manifesting itself in these forms, is *saguna*. These various objects contemplated by my mind are all resolvable into the primary qualities of nature, *sattvam*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Even when not directly cognizant of natural objects, when occupied with its purely internal thoughts and feelings, the mind is, all the same, *saguna*, the objects of reproductive knowledge being as much parts of Nature, according to our philosophers, as those of direct perception. The same is the case when the mind is no more awake, but

in a dreaming state,—for the ideas forming a dream, however illusory, have a sort of phenomenal, relative existence. But what about the state of dreamless sleep? In that state the mind does not manifest itself in any particular form. The constant flow of ideas and feelings is in abeyance. The very distinction of subject and object is, for a time, absent. But nevertheless, the mind, the Ultimate Reality, the source of all phenomena, the subject of all modifications, persists. That it persists and holds in tact all its power of manifesting itself in the various forms of Nature, is apparent from the fact that it does so manifest itself after its moments of dreamless sleep. But the form in which it exists in this state is something very different from those which it assumes in its waking and dreaming states. The state of dreamless sleep is a state without modifications, without differences, without distinctions and relations, without the *gunas*. If the *gunas* are there, as they must be supposed to be in a sense, they are there only in a nascent, germinal, unmanifested form. They exist not as effects, but as merged in the cause that produces them. This state of indifference or unmanifested difference is called *nirguna*, *nirvisesha*, by our philosophers.

But the *nirguna* state can be understood even without reference to the state of dreamless sleep. In the waking and dreaming states also, the *saguna*, modified or changeful aspect of the mind can be known only in relation to a *nirguna*, unmodifiable or unchangeable aspect opposed yet related to it. In knowing the objects presented to me as many, I distinguish myself from these

objects. Though my conscious life is manifested in the form of these objects, I know myself to be inexhaustible by them and to have an existence apart from them. While their very existence is constituted by their relation to me, I know that my existence is not so constituted by relation; it is independent and absolute. While these objects are many, I know that I am one; and while my objects change, I remain their unchanged spectator. Even the distinction of subject and object is not essential to my nature, as, in being conscious of this distinction, in knowing both the terms of this relation, I at once constitute and thus transcend it. The transcendent aspect of the mind is thus manifest even in its immanent aspect. In constituting its various objects and their relations, the mind already transcends them.

What we have said of the human mind is true also of the Divine, for what we call "our self" is verily the Divine Self manifested under limiting conditions absent in its cosmic, universal aspect. We cannot contemplate the Divine Self except as the self in us, without the limitations of our individual life. While in its individual aspect it reveals itself in the form of a limited number of objects, we contemplate its universal aspect as consisting of all objects whatever,—as filling all space and all time. While in its human aspect it constitutes the objects of our individual consciousness, and in constituting them transcends them at the same time, in its cosmic aspect, it constitutes all objects, makes all space, all time, all relations, and in making them transcends them by that very act. In individual life, we distinguish



between a waking and a dreaming state, and again between the latter and a state of dreamless sleep. In the life of the universe, these states have their counterparts in Nature as fully differentiated, as partly evolved, and as a shapeless homogeneity holding only the promise of all future developments, as at the beginning and end of a cycle.

We see, then, why our Scriptures speak of the Divine Being sometimes as *saguna*, identified with the objects of Nature, and sometimes as *nirguna*, as their negation. In some passages, in which the truth and correlation of both these aspects are intended to be shown, the sacred texts speak of him as both *saguna* and *nirguna*, as sharing the qualities of natural objects and at the same time transcending them ; for instance, in the following :—

“ It (*i.e.*, Brahman) moves, it moves not ; it is far, it is also near ; it is inside all this, it is also outside all this.” (*Isā*, 5).

“ As the same fire, entering into the world, takes the forms of the various objects (burnt by it) so the same inner-self of all takes the forms of the various objects of Nature, and is also out of them.” (*Kātha V. 9*).

“ The one only God is hidden in all things ; he is omnipresent and the inner-self of all creatures ; he guides all actions and lives in all beings ; he is the witness and the animator ; he is detached and without the *gunas*.”

The *saguna* aspect of the Divine Nature is, it is clear, a relative, dependent, changeful aspect, whereas the *nirguna* aspect is essential, absolute and eternal

In other words, the *saguna* aspect is finite, while the *nirguna* is infinite. The shifting phenomena in which the mind manifests itself are nothing apart from it; they are relative to it, dependent on it, and it is impossible to conceive them in abstraction from it. But the mind itself cannot thus be resolved into its phenomena; it indeed reveals itself in its phenomena, but is by no means exhausted by them, having an independent inner nature which itself explains their origin. In the same manner the phenomena of Nature, natural objects with all their qualities and changes, are in themselves nothing; they are real only as manifestations of the Reality underlying them, which is itself exhaustless, eternal and infinite.

The *saguna* aspect of the Divine Nature, then, consisting as it does, in objects limited in time and space—limiting one another in extent and flowing in a ceaseless stream of time,—is a relative and passing manifestation of Divine activity, whereas the *nirguna* aspect, the infinite, eternal, changeless aspect, constitutes the absolute and essential side of the Divine character. The *saguna* aspect excludes the *nirguna*, and is therefore finite, and can thus never be said to represent the Divine Nature in its full truth; whereas, the *nirguna*, which is infinite, includes the *saguna*, and represents the Divine Nature in its absolute truth. No image, no conception in the ordinary sense, is indeed possible of the Infinite One; but the Self in us, which is the same as the Self in Nature, can, with a true insight into its own nature, say without fear of contradiction, that it is absolute

truth, absolute intelligence and absolute bliss, *sat, chit, ānandam*.

We understand, then, why our theologians give a decided pre-eminence to the *nirguna* aspect of Divinity, and why, while exhorting us to contemplate and worship God in his *saguna* aspect, points to the *nirguna* as our ultimate goal,—*sā kāshihā sā parā gati,—tad Vishnoh paramān padam*. The reason is that the one, though by far the more difficult to be conceived, is infinite and absolutely true, whereas the other, while spread out before our very eyes, and practically infinite, is, strictly speaking, finite and only relatively true. The former belongs to the very *essence*, the inner nature of the Deity, while the latter belongs to his *power*. *Power*, though inexhaustible, and practically boundless, depends for its manifestation on time and space, which are not true infinities, but only indefinites. Hence the Divine power that manifests itself in objects limited in time and space holds, in our theology, a subordinate place, and the superiority is given to the Divine essence, the absolute intelligence which time and space reveal, but cannot contain. Hence also the distinction between the *svarupa lakshanas*, absolute attributes of God on the one hand,—his absolute truth, intelligence and bliss, which do not imply the existence of anything beyond him,—and on the other, his *tatastha lakshanas*, relative attributes, his creative power, omniscience, providence, justice, goodness and the like, all those attributes which seem to imply the existence of things other than himself,—a cosmos and a number of finite souls distinct

from the Infinite Spirit. In as much as these things have only a relative, dependent existence, being manifestations of his ever-active power, and not forming parts of his unchangeable, absolute essence, the attributes last mentioned are said to be only relatively true, while those which express his infinitude and undividedness are said to be essentially and absolutely true.

But while speaking of God's absolute and relative attributes, we are already on the verge of the great controversy between two rival schools of Vedantists, the Máyavádis and the Parínámvádis, the advocates of unqualified Monism and those of a qualified Monism. The controversy turns upon the real nature of God's creative energy,—upon the question whether the things produced by this energy are real or illusory existences. To the discussion of this question, and cognate ones arising out of this, we shall devote our next essay.



## IS NATURE APPARENT OR REAL ?

THE question at issue between the advocates of *Māyā* and *Parinām*, *Vivarta* and *Vikāra*, between *Visuddhādvaita* or unqualified unity on the one hand, and *Viśiṣṭādvaita* or qualified unity on the other, resolves itself into the problem whether Nature is apparent or real,—whether finite objects, objects in time and space, do really exist or only seem to exist. The controversy is not to be found in the Upanishads in an explicit form. It has grown in times much later than those when these treatises were composed, and out of attempts to expound certain utterances contained in them one way or the other. After devoting a good deal of attention to the study of the question, we have come to the conclusion that the controversy is little more than a war of words, and that modern followers of the religion of the Upanishads need not group themselves under any of the rival flags,—need not identify themselves exclusively with either the *Māyāvādis* or the *Parināmavādis*. There is, it seems to us, an unsectarian Vedantism which neither the one nor the other school truly represents, and the truth of which both, in their different ways, testify to. The fact is, there is not a single truth which one of them accepts and the other rejects, and not a single false doctrine which the one does not abjure equally with the other. But in doing the one or the other, in their acceptances and rejections, they use quite different terms and phrases, so that what the one seems

to assert, the other seems to deny, and *vice versa*. What we have said will become clear as we proceed.

The controversy arises out of the relativity of subject and object, both in its individual and universal aspects. As in the last essay, we shall try to approach the subject from the former side. We have seen how the phenomena of the mind are related to it. They are relative to it, dependent on it ; they are many, while it is one ; they are ever-changing, impermanent, while it is unchangeable and permanent. In times of dreamless sleep they are all but non-existent,—they exist only in a potential form, unified with the causal power of the mind. The question we have now to ask is, are the phenomena apparent or real ? That they have some sort of existence, that they are not absolutely unreal, admits of no question. The question is as to the nature of their existence. That they are relative to the mind, dependent on the mind, is also clear to reflection if not to ordinary common sense. That colour has no existence independent of a seeing mind, and that sound can exist only in relation to the power of hearing, may be unintelligible to unreflective people, but cannot admit of a moment's doubt to a philosopher. Independent and absolute existence, therefore, can, in no case, be attributed to phenomena. You may choose to call them real, but you must remember that, in this case, you use the word " reality " not in the sense of absolute existence, but in a different sense,—in the sense of " relative or dependent existence." But the mind is real in the former sense ; it is absolutely real,—its

existence not depending upon anything else. So, phenomena are not real in the same sense in which the mind is real, and we may even say that they are not real in the same degree in which the mind is real, for between absolute and [relative reality the difference in kind is really one of quantity. If then, by "reality" one understood only absolute reality, one might say that if the mind is real, phenomena are unreal,—that as they are nothing but the mind, all that needs to be said about them is already said in the proposition, "the mind is real" and they do not deserve to be affirmed in a co-ordinate proposition. Looked at in this way, therefore, phenomena are not real, but only apparent. Even when they seem to be most real,—in our waking hours,—their existence is only relative, dependent, not for themselves but for another,—apparent, therefore, and not real.

Looked at, again, from another stand-point,—from the stand-point of their changefulness, their transitoriness, phenomena will appear to lose a large part of the reality ascribed to them by common sense. What is red now, becomes white the next moment; what is hard, may be made soft with no great difficulty; what is a human body now, with every beauty of form, colour and proportion, will be reduced to ashes in the course of a few hours. Do such fitful, evanescent things deserve to be called real? Are they not appearances rather than realities?

Again, in the hours of dreamless sleep, phenomena seem to lose even that relative, apparent existence that

they possess in our waking hours. It cannot, indeed, be said that they become absolutely non-existent in those hours. Were it so, they would not re-start into their relative existence and be recognised in their identity in waking hours. But it is evident that their mode of existence in the former condition is very different from their existence in the latter. In the former their existence is only potential, causal, and not actual, and their differences only implicit, not explicit. Now, how can things that can thus cease to exist for all practical purposes be said to be real? They are only apparent. Phenomenal or apparent existence—seeming to exist—is the only sort of existence that can be attributed to them.

Now, it will be seen that, the facts remaining exactly the same, a very different description may be given of them and a very different phraseology used with reference to them if one chooses to do so. It may be said, for instance, that though the phenomena of the mind are not independent of it, they are, in a sense, distinguished from it—distinguished as modes or modifications from the thing modified. The thing modified and its modifications are indeed related, but they are not absolutely the same. Phenomena are many and different, whereas the mind is one. As modifications then, phenomena, with their plurality and difference, are as real as the mind, the thing modified. Hence their existence is not merely apparent, it is real. Secondly, as to their transitoriness, their changefulness, it must be observed that though they change in form, their substance remains



uncexhausted. This substance is, indeed, nothing but the power of the mind to produce phenomena, to assume various forms, but this power itself is something real and not apparent. It is also, as the power of modifying itself in various ways, something distinguishable from the permanent, unchangeable aspect of the mind, that aspect in which it is the seat of eternal ideas. Both these aspects then, as distinct from each other, are equally real, and none apparent. In the third place, the state of dreamless sleep, though a state in which phenomena and their differences remain unmanifested, is, by no means, a state of indifference or perfect homogeneity. Though unmanifested, the objects are there, with all their differences in tact; otherwise they could not be reproduced in waking life in all their variety and fulness. In this case also, then, there is no room for saying that identity only is real, and difference only apparent. Reality has to be affirmed of both identity and difference.

We have only to universalise our case, and we are face to face with the problem in hand. Put God in the place of the mind, and the objects of Nature, in that of the phenomena of the mind, and we understand the point at issue between the Mâyavâdin and the Parinâmavâdin. Nature is relative to God, dependent on him; it is only a mode assumed by him. It is constantly changing, it is in a perpetual flux. And then, a time comes, at the end of every cycle, when it loses all its wonderful complexity and is reduced to a causal form in which the germs of variety are only potential. And even in this causal form it is nothing but the power of

God to project a variety of appearances in time and space, and not an independent reality. What should we say of such a thing? Is its existence apparent or real? We may choose one or the other form of expression according as we look at the facts from one or another stand-point. The facts themselves will remain all the same. Emphasizing the relative and dependent character of Nature, we may say that as it has no absolute existence, it does not deserve to be called real,—it is only apparent. Again, directing our attention particularly to the fact that Nature, as relative and dependent, as phenomenal, is, by these very characteristics, distinct from God, the Supreme Reality, we may say that as thus distinguished, it has a reality as much as the Supreme Reality. Again, as to the homogeneity to which Nature is reduced at the end of one and the beginning of another period of creation, we may bring into prominence the fact that the homogeneity is more apparent than real. To the Supreme Intellect, to which the past and the future are as real as the present, the infinite complexity of Nature is present even in its potential condition. To him, therefore, if not to finite intelligence, Nature is as real in its potentiality as in its actuality.

The repugnance of the Máyáবাদin to admitting the reality of Nature is due to his firm faith in the absolute attributes of God,—in his infinitude, eternity, unchangeableness, absolute intelligence and indivisibility. He thinks that the admission of the reality of Nature amounts to a denial of these attributes. If finite things really

exist, do not they form so many limitations of the Infinite, which, in that case, ceases to be infinite? Secondly, as the Eternal is neither born, nor dies, and as he is Infinite, One only without a second, where is the room for other things coming into and going out of real existence? Again, to say that change is real, is to say that the Absolute Reality changes, that it becomes what it was not before, which means that it is subject to the law of causation, and is therefore no Absolute at all. Further, if, to the Supreme Intellect, everything is equally present, what possible meaning can be attached to things past and future? Then, as to finite intelligence, subject to error and ignorance, where is the room for such a thing in the midst of Infinite Knowledge? To say, as the *Parinámvádin* says, that God assumes the form of the world, that he himself becomes the various objects of the world, animate and inanimate, is to say that the Infinite One divests himself of his infinitude, ceases to be infinite,—a doctrine which is absurd on the face of it, and which makes all spiritual exercises, all efforts to attain unity with the Infinite utterly unmeaning. The *Máyávádin* therefore concludes that objects in time and space, including finite intelligence, or, to speak more correctly, all things that make intelligence appear limited, are only appearances and not realities, and the power by which God projects these appearances is like that by which a magician performs his wonderful feats. It is a most mysterious power, its nature transcending human comprehension. It is, on the one hand, one with God; it is his power, and nothing apart from him.

On the other hand, as something manifesting itself in innumerable finite objects, in a series of innumerable changes without beginning and end, it is something distinguishable from the Divine essence, into which no notion of finitude, mutability and divisibility enters. The mysteriousness of this power further consists in its apparently making things come to pass which are contradictory and therefore impossible. By this power, he who is one and infinite seems to make himself many and finite; he who is unchangeable seems to change himself perpetually; he who is absolute knowledge and holiness seems to make himself ignorant and unholy. Hence our philosophers call this power *Mâyâ*. It is a most expressive term, indicating the inscrutableness of a power whose nature can no more be understood than its existence denied. The *Mâyâvâdis* do not claim that the postulation of this incomprehensible power affords any real explanation of the enigmas of the world; they candidly admit the final incomprehensibility of things, the mysteriousness of creation, and gives this mystery a name—*Mâyâ* or *Avidyâ*. This term, *Avidyâ*, when spoken of as the cause of the world, does not exactly mean ignorance, but rather ‘not-knowledge’ *i.e.*, something seemingly different from knowledge, which constitutes the essence of Divinity. Now God, as contemplated in himself in his infinite and immutable essence, apart from *Mâyâ*, is the *Nirgunam Brahman*, of whom or which nothing more can be said than that it is Truth, Intelligence and Bliss,—*Sat, Chit, Anandam*. As contemplated with reference to *Mâyâ*, as producing the world

of finite objects by this mysterious power, God is *Isvara*, the Ruler, the Lord, what western theologians call the Personal God,—the omniscient and omnipotent Creator Preserver and Destroyer of the world, the Father, Guide, Instructor and Saviour of finite souls. The *Mâyâvâdis* do not say that these attributes of God,—attributes which are called ‘personal,’—are not true. What they say is that they are relatively true,—true, that is, with reference to that mysterious power by which God seems to produce things different from him. These attributes imply a certain difference, a duality between God and the world; and duality is the result of *Mâyâ*. As *Mâyâ* is without beginning and without end, being the power of the Eternal Being, the *saguna* character of God is also eternal; he is eternally *Isvara*, the Lord, as well as *Brahman*.

Besides the distinction of *nirgunam* and *sagunam*,—of *Brahman* and *Isvara*, another conception is required to complete the *Mâyâvâdi*’s scheme of existence. It is that of *Brahmâ* or *Hiranyagarbha*, the World-soul. *Isvara*, the Lord, though related to *Mâyâ*, is above its influence. He wields *Avidyâ* or Nescience, and is not therefore subject to it. But the very existence of the world, the world of appearance, the world which consists of things apparent but seeming to be real, the world wherein plurality, change, and limitation have an existence for practical purposes, imply the existence of a World-soul, to which appearances are related—to which they appear; for, to the all-wise *Isvara*, the distinction of apparent and real does not exist. Now, this World-soul, implied in

finitude and change, and postulated under various names in the Upanishads and their commentaries, is significantly called the *Karya-Brahman*, the Effect-God as distinguished from the *Karana-Brahman* the Causal God or Isvara. He is also called the *Apara-Brahman*, the Lower God, as distinct from *Para-Brahman*, the Higher God, the God that transcends finite existence. This Effect-God, then, the first and highest emanation from the Supreme Cause, is the totality of created existence,—the whole of which so-called inanimate objects as well as finite souls are parts. Things that seem to us quite apart from any conscious life, events that appear to be entirely objective,—all cosmic changes in fact,—are comprehended in the all-containing consciousness of Brahman. It must be remembered, however, that these distinctions of Brahman, Isvara and Brahmā are only so many stand-points from which the same Being is looked at. They do not imply any divisions in him who, though variously contemplated, is one and indivisible. It is the same Being that, contemplated as absolutely self-identical, as one and without a second, is Brahman ; as the Cause of the world, Isvara ; and as the conscious totality of all effects, Brahmā or Hiranyagarbha.

We must now turn to the Parināmavādin once more. He does not seem to have entered into the question so deeply as the Mâyāvādin. He appears not to see the difficulties of his theory that material objects and finite souls are real objects, but are, at the same time, relative to and dependent on God. He also does not seem to be conscious of the contradiction which the Mâyāvādin

seeks to escape by pronouncing the world to be only apparent,—the contradiction of making God infinite and finite, changeful and unchangeable, *saguna* and *nirguna* at the same time. However, he has, at his command, a large amount of practical common sense which gives him a decided advantage over his opponent. He sees that if, to save the infinitude and immutableness of God, you pronounce the world to be unreal, you on the other hand, dishonour him by likening him to a magician, by describing his power and wisdom as instruments for producing illusions. And then, if spiritual exercises become unmeaning unless there be an Infinite and Immutable Being as our goal, do not they become equally meaningless if there be not a real individual soul to be saved, real errors to be eschewed and real sins to be washed away? And after all, when the Mâyāvâdin admits the existence of the Divine power of creation, what does he gain by calling the effects of this power unreal, or by describing this power as something less real than the Divine essence? When the relative and dependent nature of finite objects has been acknowledged, when they have been seen as mere modes of the Divine existence, we do no violence to the truth of the unity and infinitude of the Deity by calling these objects real. And as the Mâyāvâdin himself cannot do without these objects, as he has to acknowledge their existence at every turn, and even to ascribe to them an eternal existence in the Divine power and omniscience, of what importance is his distinction of apparent and real existence,—*vydvaharika* and *pàramârthika sattâ*? And when

the creative power of God is as real as God himself, since it is one with him, why should any distinction be made between Brahman and Isvara, between the *sagunam* and *nirgunam* Brahman? Since the *gunas*, the primary elements of Nature, are always with God in either a manifested or unmanifested form, he is never really *nirguna*; he is eternally *saguna*, eternally Isvara, the Ruler, the Lord. But there is a real distinction between that aspect of him in which he is Cause and that in which he is effect,—between him as the Creator and as the totality of all created existence. Though, therefore, the distinction between Brahman, the neuter, the impersonal, and Isvara, the Personal God, is untenable, the distinction between Isvara and Brahman, between Kârana-Brahman and Kârya-Brahman is legitimate.

As we said at the beginning, the controversy is little more than a war of words. Nothing is contended for on one side which is not admitted in some shape or other by the opposite side. An Infinite Being which is the final explanation and ultimate reality of all existence, a creative power out of which all things come, a state of potential existence in which all differences are unmanifested, the causal and mundane aspects of the Deity, finite souls distinct from the Infinite and seeking union with the latter,—all these appear in both the contending systems. The difference is not so much of doctrine, if a difference of phraseology is not taken as such,—as of emphasis. Though the same things are recognised in both the systems, they do not put the



same emphasis on all things. The Mâyāvādin emphasises the relativity and evanescence of finite things; the Parinâmādvādin asks us not to forget that though relative and changeful, these things are manifestations of a real Divine power. The Mâyāvādin draws attention to the unity and identity of God amid the apparent differences of natural objects; the Parinâmādvādin points out that difference is not opposed to identity, and is as real as the latter. The one gives prominence to the truth that the Divine essence is untouched by the imperfections of the world; the other adds that things, with all their imperfections, are nevertheless full of the Divine presence. The former insists upon our constantly keeping in view the ultimate unity of God and man, a unity which alone makes salvation attainable; the latter tells us not to lose sight of our difference with the Infinite, a difference which alone gives a meaning to our search after salvation. We need not dwell upon the point. This difference of emphasis pervades the two systems and constitutes their main distinction.

We have confined ourselves to the exposition of the philosophical aspect of the question, and have not touched its scriptural aspect. A good deal of energy is spent on either side in interpreting scriptural texts,—in trying to find out, for instance, whether the admission of duality or difference in a passage is final or only tentative,—made merely for the purpose of enjoining a preliminary spiritual discipline, or as an expression of final truth; whether, again, an assertion of unity does or does not exclude a real diversity of modes; and

thirdly, to what extent and in what respects an illustration drawn from natural objects or from the practical life of man to explain the relation of God to the world is to be accepted as a representation of ultimate truth ; and so on. However important, from one point of view, such discussions may be, we have purposely refrained from entering into them, and have tried only to set forth, in brief, the appeals that the two theories make to Reason as distinct from faith in the Scriptures. An elaborate discussion of the question in its scriptural aspects, with occasional resorts to independent reasoning, will be found in Sankara's commentary on the 14th aphorism, pada 1, chapter II of the *Sariraka Mīmāṃsā*. Important statements on the points at issue between the two schools will be found in the commentary on some of the other aphorisms of the same pada.

We ought to be thankful to the Mâyāvādin for emphasising the relative character of the world and thus turning our attention seriously to God as the Ultimate Reality. The Parināmavādin, again, deserves our gratitude for reminding us constantly that the diversities by which we, in our ignorance and weakness, are distracted, are, after all, manifestations of the power and wisdom of God, and do not conflict with his unity. The Mâyāvādin only cuts the gordian knot, and does not untie it, by trying to escape the contradictions implied in creation by pronouncing creation itself to be apparent and not real. The Parināmavādin keeps his hold firm on both sides of the contradiction—the finite and the Infinite, the Eternal and the evanescent, but instead of any dialectic show-

ing the necessary correlation of both these aspects of Reality, he gives us only a number of figures drawn from nature, showing how the same object may have unity and diversity, a changing and an unchanging aspect, forgetting for the moment, that figures are not arguments and do not satisfy the intellect, and that the absolute unity of mind is something incomparable to the false unities displayed by objects in time and space. We must confess that the best thought on the subject, a thought which, if it does not give full satisfaction to the intellect, seems at any rate to penetrate far more deeply into the real nature of the problem than those furnished by any of our native schools of thought, has come to us from a foreign source. It would be going beyond the scope of this treatise to try to give anything like a fair idea of the method referred to by us. But we make a short extract from a book by one of its chief representatives, an extract which may serve as a slight impetus to the study of the chief writings of a school of philosophy which appears to have made a vigorous, and to a great extent, successful attempt to solve the problem variously handled by our *Mâyāvādis* and *Parināmādis*.

“Being and not-Being are identical. This mysterious utterance of Hegel, round which so much controversy has waged, and which has seemed to many but a caprice of metaphysic run mad, may now be seen to have a serious meaning. It does not mean that Being and not-Being are not also distinguished; but it does mean that the distinction is not absolute, and that if it is made absolute, at that very moment it dis-

appears. The whole truth, therefore, cannot be expressed either by the simple statement that Being and not-Being are identical or by the simple statement that they are different. But the consideration of what these abstractions are in themselves when we isolate them from each other,—just as a scientific man might isolate a special element in order to find the essential relativity or energy that lies in it—shows that their truth is not either their identity or their difference, but is their *identity-in-difference*. But one who has apprehended this thought has already risen above the abstractions whose unity-in-indifference he has seen. He is like the scientific man who has discovered an identity of principle connecting phenomena between which formerly he had seen no essential relation. By such discovery, the mere external view of them as different things, related only by adjacent place or time, has disappeared, and the one phenomenon has become the counterpart or complementary aspect of the other. In like manner, the thinker who has fully seen into the correlativity of given opposites has reached a new attitude of thought in regard to them. They have become for him inseparable elements of a higher unity, which is now seen to be organic or vital. Or the whole thought is seen to be a process through certain phases each of which necessitated the other, and by the unity of which it—the whole thought—is constituted. Nor does the movement stop here. The whole thought reached in this way has again its opposite or negative, which it at once excludes and involves, and the process may be repeated in regard to it, with the result of reach-

ing a still higher unity, a more complex thought in which it and its opposite are elements. And so on through widening sweep of differentiation and integration, till the whole body of thought is seen in its organic unity and development—every fibre of it alive with relation to the whole in which it is a constituent element."

—*Edward Caird's "Hegel."*

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## INCARNATION.

A species of incarnation theory is implied in the very fundamental principle of Vedantism—the ultimate unity of God and man. The consciousness that is in us, that we, in the language of ordinary life, call our own, is really the Divine Consciousness itself, manifested or reproduced under certain limitations, though itself unlimited. The finite, as finite,—the body, the vital power, the sensorium, the intellect itself, considered as a finite object,—is not, indeed, the Divine Consciousness. But these objects, with their limitations, cannot be conceived except in relation to a Consciousness transcending all limits. They are all illumined by, and thus reveal, an Infinite Mind in which they rest. The simplest and meanest of men then, inasmuch as he is conscious, is a reproduction, an incarnation, of the Divine Mind. Not that his individuality is lost in the Divine universality. His intellect and his sensorium, if not his body and vital power, constitute his individuality. He is an individual inasmuch as he is the aggregate of a limited number of ideas and the subject of a limited number of sensations and emotions. The aggregate that constitutes his individuality is not the same as that which constitutes another individual like him. Here lies his finitude, his distinction from the Infinite. But even while knowing himself to be an Individual, distinct from other individuals, he reveals something in him that transcends individuality. The very *consciousness* of himself as distinct

from others, the *consciousness of limits*, is the self-revelation of a Being who is beyond all limits, who makes limits and their relations possible. [Thus man, as a conscious being, is, in the truest sense, an incarnation of God, a manifestation of God in flesh. However ignorant he may be as an individual, however small may be the stock of ideas actually revealed in him, however little he may have realised the ideal life of the spirit—the life of perfect goodness and holiness, he, by the mere fact of being a conscious being, participates in the Divine essence revealed through his thoughts and feelings and acting through his senses and bodily organs.

This doctrine of universal incarnation, identical with the very essence of the religion of the Upanishads, seems to have satisfied the spiritual instincts of the earlier teachers and followers of Hindu Theism for a long time. In fact it must suffice for all spiritual needs and meet them much better than any other theory less natural and reasonable than it, so long as the true theistic instinct is really awake,—so long as believers in God are aware of the grounds of their belief. But as soon as that true vision of God in man grows dim, when, though thirsting after God, man forgets how and where to find him, he feels the need of something external to lead him to God, some mediator through whom he may hold communion with God. When things as such, man as such, fail to reveal God, seem to be without God, we hope to find him by having recourse to objects,—things or persons particularly qualified to reveal God to us. This is the condition at which our people seem to have arrived when the

*Bhagavadgītā* was written. The doctrine of universal incarnation was felt to be insufficient ; one of particular incarnation seemed necessary. It seemed necessary to hold up particular historical or mythological persons as incarnations of God. Not that the author himself of that remarkable book had fallen from the height of the earlier teachers. He seems indeed to have shared their keen spiritual insight to the fullest, and to have remained true to their lofty ideals. But he found the nation already gone down a great deal. The simplicity and candour of ancient faith was gone. Poetical mythology had taken the place of free and plain discussions on the nature of God. Meditations on the revelation of God in Nature and man were less in fashion than the celebration of the physical exploits and intellectual achievements of deified heroes. He found the nation in this plight, and sought to wean it therefrom. He attempted to re-establish people—thinking people at any rate,—in the lofty faith they were losing or had lost. But in this attempt he seems to have made some compromises with the mythological tendencies of the times. He tried to engraft the philosophical faith of the Vedānta on the popular religion of tradition. Where his attempt succeeded, it resulted in a faith which, though tinged with mythology, was, on the whole, richer and more fertile than the original. But where it failed, the great authority of the book seems to have confirmed people in superstitions extremely prejudicial to the interests of rational religion.

The historical sketch given above, which may seem



to be a digression, was necessary to mark the transition from the doctrine of universal incarnation implied in the fundamental principle of Hindu Theism to that of particular incarnations as taught in the Puranas. The transition is indicated and explained by the *Bhagavad-gītā*. It recognises both the doctrines. God indeed incarnates himself in all men, and the way in which he does so is the same in all. There is no difference between one finite being and another as to the *kind* of divine manifestation that forms the basis of his life. But though not in kind, the manifestation of God in man may and does differ in *degree*. The various degrees in which knowledge, power, goodness and holiness exist in man are numberless. The objective aspect of conscious life manifests, in different men, a boundless variety of form and content notwithstanding the ultimate unity of the subject. The number and order of ideas, the kind and degree of intellectual and spiritual power, differ endlessly in different men. In this respect, then, in the manifestation of the contents of conscious life, God incarnates himself differently in different men. In one sense, therefore, those in whom knowledge, power or holiness manifests itself in unusually large degrees, may be called pre-eminently incarnations of God. Such are those who have built the systems of thought that rule human intellect, who, by setting living examples of righteousness, lift up their fellow beings higher and higher in the scale of spiritual life, and those who, by redeeming large tracts of land either from ignorance, barbarism or anarchy, establish over them the reign of

enlightenment, order and peace. The *Gītā* identifies all such persons with God in a special manner, calling them the *bībhūti*s, i. e. powers or manifestations of God, but not forgetting, at the same time, that all persons and things are such manifestations in a general sense. It is clear that this doctrine of special incarnation is in perfect harmony with that of universal incarnation. Nor can it be a matter of indifference in spiritual life to take or not to take special cognizance of these special incarnations. It is a part of the Divine economy that the less advanced should be taught and led by the more advanced, and that concrete embodiments of spiritual power should help us more effectively than abstract rules and theories. It is also true that the realization of God in particular places, events and persons helps the realization of his universal presence in Nature and history. The habitual recognition of Divine incarnation, in the sense explained, in persons of extraordinary powers is therefore a most potent factor in the development of spiritual life, and those of our theologians who have emphasised its importance have, far from acting against the spirit of earlier theistic writers, rather helped its development in the lines laid down by them.

But it is extremely doubtful how many writers of the Puranic age actually deserve the credit of furthering the legitimate development of our ancient theistic faith. That the writers of some of the higher Puranas held theories of incarnation no less rational than the writers of the Upanishads, seems evident from several passages in their writings. It difficult to believe, for instance, that

the learned authors of the *Vishnu*, *Bhāgavata* and *Mārkaṇdeya* Puranas, with the deep philosophical thoughts they have put forth in their works, held any irrational theory of incarnation,—held, for instance, the popular view that God habitually lives in a particular place and incarnates himself only at occasional emergencies. On this subject, we shall transcribe here what we said elsewhere some time ago :—“There is one thing in regard to the Hindu scriptures the clear apprehension of which facilitates, in a remarkable degree, the understanding of these writings, and the misapprehension of which proves a veritable stumbling block in the way of their due appreciation. We refer to the various names under which the Supreme Being is spoken of in them. It is always the etymological meaning and the connotation which the writer using a particular name gives to it, and not its historical or mythological associations that should be kept in mind if one would enter into the real spirit of the writer. A mistake in regard to this proves fatal to the due apprehension of the spirit even of our best writers—the most thoughtful or pious among them. Thus, if a reader of the *Vishnupuranam* proceeds with the idea that ‘Vishnu’ is a fancied four-armed god of limited power and goodness, and not the Supreme Being himself, the common object of worship to both Śākta and Vaiṣṇava, Hindu and Christian, then the whole book will appear to him nothing but a series of praises to a false god, or, at best a narration of the exploits of a deified hero to whom, in a fit of devotion, the writer ascribes characteristics which are proper only to the One

Infinite Lord of the universe. But the fact is that by 'Vishnu,' the writer means nothing but the All-pervading One, the Supreme Being himself, the God of universal, unsectarian religion, and not a being of limited powers. His oft-repeated characterisation of his Deity as a Being of infinite knowledge, power, goodness and holiness should make this clear and warn his reader against any misconception regarding his theology. It should be seen that with all his love for sectarian names, ideas and stories, he is the worshipper, not of any finite god or goddess, nor of any particular aspect of the divine nature, but of the Supreme Brahman, himself in the totality of his glorious attributes. When this is seen, sectarianism is at an end, and we value the writer as a teacher of religion,—of true, universal religion,—not indeed for his sectarian views, but rather in spite of them. When, indeed, he speaks of Vishnu becoming visible in a particular form, of his flying in the sky on the back of a bird, he seems to belie his faith in the Infinite and Immovable, but instead of leaping to such a conclusion, we should rather inquire how the writer seeks to reconcile such a view with his faith in an infinite God. We should try to understand in what light particular objects, objects in time and space—be it a celestial being or a bird,—are looked at from the writer's philosophical stand-point, and what disciplines he inculcates for the realization of the Divine existence in and through these objects. When these things are considered, much of what at first sight seems due to a sectarian mythology, is found to be not irreconcilable with the fundamental principles of philo-

sophy, though they may be due to *misconceptions* in science or history. However, the main point we were insisting upon is that even sectarian writings may be profitably studied if one has an eye for the universal principles which they inculcate under a sectarian garb." But it must be said that there is much in these writings which is calculated to mislead the mind and dim and narrow its vision. The actual influence they have exerted on the national mind in fixing the attention of the great majority of our people on certain historical or mythological events, and making them inattentive to the direct and immediate presence of God in Nature and mind,—in the ordinary events of daily life,—shows unmistakably with what caution we must use these handbooks of popular religion,—thankfully accepting the light thrown by them on the great problems of life, but avoiding the fog, dust and clouds frequently raised by them.

But is there not another doctrine of incarnation held by a large class of our theistic writers? Is not that theory one of special incarnation? Does it not teach that at least in one instance, if not in several, the manifestation of God in flesh was complete, involving that of all his perfections, natural and moral? That there is such a theory, and that it is held by some recent Vaishnava writers, at any rate, admits of no doubt. But it is difficult, we suppose, to say how many writers of unquestioned authority really advocate this doctrine. Sankarāchārya, though habitually speaking of Śrīkrishna as God incarnate, distinctly speaks of him as a *partial* manifestation of the Deity in the preface to his com-

mentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*. The *Vishnupurāṇam* speaks of Sri Krishna and Balarāma metaphorically as incarnations of a black and a white hair of the God-head. In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇam*, Parikshit speaks of Sri Krishna in the Rāsa Panchādhyāya as a partial incarnation of God,<sup>†</sup> and Sukadeva does not contradict him. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Sri Krishna, though habitually speaking of himself as God, also mentions himself as one of many Divine *bībhūti*s or manifestations ("*Vṛishṇinām Vasudevostmi*"), and in the *Anugītā*, he refuses to repeat to Arjuna his own teachings in the *Bhagavadgītā*, since he was then no longer, as he confesses, in that exalted attitude of communion from which he had uttered those truths,—thus letting it to be understood that it is only in moments of conscious union with God that one may speak in the lofty strain of identity with the Divine Being which is to be met with in many parts of the *Bhagavadgītā* and other writings conceived in a similar spirit.

It is indeed contended, on what grounds it is not clear, that Sri Krishna and other personages who had attained a very high state of spiritual development, lived in perpetual communion with God,—in constant, unbroken consciousness of unity with the Infinite. This, if true, would indeed constitute such personages to be incarnations of God in a very special sense, in a sense in which the great majority of men,—including even highly gifted persons,—are not incarnations of God. But even in such cases the difference is not one of kind, but of degree. The consciousness of unity with God is only one,—indeed the highest—of the many gifts and graces

that God imparts to man. This imparting of his grace, the *revelation* of this truth to the human consciousness, is an event in time, and implies a finite understanding to which it is revealed. It therefore implies difference as well as unity between the Divine Being, in whom it eternally exists, and the finite being who receives it in time and under definite conditions. The presence of this finite understanding, again, proves that though the fundamental form of the Divine consciousness is revealed to it, its contents cannot be so revealed in their totality. This finite understanding is, indeed, a reproduction, an incarnation of the Divine understanding, but the very fact of its incarnation, its manifestation, under the limitations of flesh, makes it necessarily finite, and precludes the reproduction of Divine wisdom and power, in their entirety in connexion with it. It seems to us evident, therefore, that the theory of special incarnation referred to, the theory which sets up an individual or a number of individuals as perfect incarnations of God, is self-contradictory and inconsistent with the fundamental principles of the Upanishads.

## RE-INCARNATION.

THE doctrine of re-incarnation, the doctrine that the individual soul, after the dissolution of one body, is re-born with another, pervades the whole of Hindu Theology, being held by all schools of Hindu thought, including even the atheistic school of the Sāṅkhyas, and is held in a modified form even by the heterodox Buddhists. At the present time, under the influence of Christian thought, a considerable portion of educated Hindus seems to have lost faith in the doctrine. With the loss of faith in re-incarnation, faith in immortality itself seems to have suffered a decay, at any rate, to have become vague and shaky, for a state of disembodied existence for finite souls, possibly without a visible world and a society affording scope for intellectual and spiritual intercourse, is hardly conceivable. Whenever the belief in a future life shows signs of life and feeds and supports spiritual exercises, it is found connected with some conception or other of embodied existence under pretty nearly the same conditions as determine life on earth.

The doctrine in its essential form, without the crudities with which it is often found associated, is one, of which no educated and thoughtful man need be ashamed. It has got very strong arguments to commend it to the intellect, some of which we proceed to set forth.

To understand re-incarnation, we must first have a clear conception of the individuality of man—his individuality not merely as an embodied being, as an animal,



but as a spirit. Monism, when understood in a superficial manner, has the effect of deadening and gradually evaporating the belief in individual immortality. If God, who pervades all space and time, is the soul of finite beings, what is there in them, argues such Monism, that persists in a finite form after the dissolution of the body, and re-incarnates itself? Does not the individualisation of the Universal Spirit then cease with the destruction of the individualising agency, the body, just as the space in a jar ceases to be distinguishable from infinite space when the earthy partitions are broken? It is forgotten that there are much subtler partitions between the universal and the individual than this gross body, and that the individuality constituted by them, though it uses the bodily organs for its self-manifestation, shows evident marks of its independence of them and its capacity for using a quite fresh set of them when the present one becomes useless. These subtler objects are the sensorium, the understanding, and the egoity or self-consciousness that accompanies, because it forms the basis of, all sensations and ideas. We know indeed that our thoughts and feelings represent Reality, that they have an objective basis, that they are the manifestations of the One Universal Infinite Spirit. But the limitations under which the Infinite manifests itself in individuals are equally evident. The sensations of colour, sound, touch and the like, that form the contents of my conscious life at the present moment, are indeed the manifestations of the universal sensorium. They form parts of the objective world of time and space, and are necessarily connected

with other spatial and temporal phenomena. The objects that I see around, the unities that present themselves to my intellect, are really the activities of the same distinguishing and unifying Intellect that makes the world possible. In conceiving the world, I necessarily conceive it in relation to the same understanding that orders the content of my individual life. The self-consciousness that accompanies every experience of my conscious life, the unity to which I refer all its differences of expression, I find it necessary to universalize and objectify when I think of the world. I cannot even think of different souls, different centres of experience, without subsuming these under an all-containing Soul as their basis and ultimate Reality. But notwithstanding this unity with the Universal, the difference is undeniable, and must be seen in the fulness of its reality if we would not merge all ethical and spiritual life in a gross, superficial Pantheism. My sensations are, it is evident, only an infinitesimal part of those that constitute the Universal Sensorium. Of the innumerable sensations that form the sensitive aspect of Nature, my sensations form only an inconceivably small proportion. My ideas again, the concrete shapes in which Nature presents itself to me, the unities of conception in which my intellectual power manifests itself, represent, similarly, an unimaginably small portion of the actual contents of Nature—the infinite variety of form and quality that constitute it in its totality. I understand so little of the world, that it is truer to say that I do not understand it than that I do. Though the Absolute Unity in which everything is com-

prehended is at the basis of my life, I see that it reproduces here only a small fraction of its infinite power and wisdom. There is then this unmistakable distinction between God and man, a distinction in which the essence remaining the same, there is the totality of objective content on the one side, and a partial reflection or reproduction of it on the other. This partiality of reproduction is what constitutes the individuality of finite minds. The reproduction has a relative beginning in time, an order of development or manifestation, and occasional lapses and periods of suspense which make our mental life a process of growth through innumerable vicissitudes, while in the absolute consciousness of the Eternal there is no change, no progress. That this difference between God and man has a place in the Universal itself, and is respected and maintained by it, is also evident from what takes place in the phenomena of sleeping and waking. In dreamless sleep, individuality, or rather the manifestation of individual life, suffers a partial suspense. The wave that constitutes it seems to return to the ocean. Nothing proves more clearly the absolute dependence of man on God and the vanity of man's pride and vaunted freedom than this helpless condition. The individual sleeps in the Universal, and thus proves that it is at the absolute mercy of the latter. But the same fact that proves our absolute dependence on God proves also the truth of our distinction from him. The temporary suspense of individuality in dreamless sleep is not a merging, not a total sublation of difference. The contents of every individual life are, during

this 'suspense, maintained in tact,—in all their fulness and distinction. There is no loss, and no mingling. When the time comes, each individual starts up from the bosom of the Eternal, the Ever-waking, with its wealth of conscious life undiminished, with its identity undimmed. Every one gets back what was his own, and nothing but his own. There seem to be separate chambers in the Eternal Bosom for each individual to rest soundly and unmolested.

What, now, are the proofs that our individual souls existed in an embodied form before our last births and will be re-incarnated in fresh bodies when our present ones are dissolved? Before we proceed to other proofs, we shall see what proofs, if any, are afforded by the phenomena we have just observed,—those of dreamless sleep and re-awaking. They prove, first, that the contents of our conscious, individual life can exist in the Eternal Consciousness with their totality and difference in tact even in the absence of the body and its organs. It is not the body, not the brain, not the nervous system that sustains thought. The contents of consciousness can be retained only in a conscious being. Thoughts can persist, can retain their essence and identity, only in a thinking being remaining conscious and self-identical in the midst of change. The reproduction of such contents in us as "I am the same being, now as I was before," "this object is the same that I saw yesterday," "this idea is the same that occurred to me before I slept," implies that during the temporary lapse of individual life these ideas are re-

tained in a Conscious Being who never ceases to be conscious of them, for ideas can persist only when they are thought,—a Being who has an eternal, ever-conscious aspect besides his intermittent manifestation in an individual form. However instrumental our brain-cells may be in the reproduction of the contents of conscious life in the state of re-awaking, they cannot explain their persistence in the hours of sleep; far less can they be identified with those contents. If, then, the elements of our individual life persist and retain their identity and integrity without the instrumentality of the brain and other bodily organs, if their continuity depends on the Eternal Mind which forms their basis, and which, as we have seen, respects the limitations of personality in which they are ordered, there is not the slightest ground for the fear which haunts us in our thoughtless moments that the dissolution of our bodies means the discontinuance and annihilation of individual life.

But if the phenomena of sleep and awaking prove the continuance of the individual consciousness in the universal, and its independence of physical conditions for this continuance, they also prove the dependence of that life on such conditions for its actual manifestation. Sleep indicates the temporary exhaustion of nervous power. When, by continual activity, the nervous system has lost its strength, and requires to be refreshed by rest, it ceases to work, and the cessation of its activity is accompanied by a temporary suspense of consciousness in its individual manifestation. It is only when the strength of the organs has been restored by sufficient

rest, that the flow of thoughts and feelings that constitutes individual life recommences, and the identity and continuity of individual consciousness is re-established. In the waking state also, the health and vigour of mental life are found determined by the soundness and strength of the organism, and injuries to the organs specially connected with the manifestation of consciousness are seen to materially affect the order and vividness of this manifestation. A valid induction from these patent facts is that the re-appearance of individual consciousness after the dissolution of the present body will require a fresh organism with essentially the same properties. We cannot indeed be absolutely sure that there are no other conditions of the re-manifestation of consciousness than those with which we are acquainted. But in the absence of any proof of the existence of those conditions, we cannot say that there are probably such conditions; nay, we can hardly assert even their possibility. It seems barely possible that, as is asserted, at a certain stage of development, individuals acquire the power of disembodying themselves, extricating themselves from their gross bodies and continuing their conscious lives in a subtle body imperceptible to the senses. But even admitting the possibility of the evolution of this power in extraordinary cases, it may be safely laid down that so far as ordinary individual life is concerned, there is not the slightest probability of its reproduction and actual continuance except in connection with an organism similar to that which we possess in our present life.

The same phenomena, and those of forgetting and

recollecting generally, prove another important truth,—a truth which is often overlooked, and the overlooking of which furnishes one of the current arguments against re-incarnation. That truth is, that by passing out of our memory, a fact does not cease to have connexion with our mental life and even to determine it materially. In an independent, self-sustained mind like the Divine, the presence or absence of an idea can mean nothing less than its presence or absence in consciousness. Something which has passed out of its cognizance has ceased to have any existence for it. But this is not true of our finite minds, which are contained in and perpetually sustained by the Infinite. Facts are constantly going out of our individual consciousness and returning to it from the Divine Mind which forms its eternal basis, and in which they are perpetually held. At the present moment, for instance, when I am intent upon writing this essay, how few of the manifold facts of my life are actually present with me ! But they are nevertheless determining my present action from the background of my consciousness, in which they lie hidden. How many events have preceded and made this piece of composition possible ! Most of them cannot, by any efforts, be recalled, and will not perhaps revisit my mind any more ; some can be recalled, but are absent now ; others are starting into consciousness from the dark chambers of the mind in which they lay concealed only a few moments back. The performance in question is due to a certain permanent form which the mind has taken as the combined effect of these various classes of facts, and to the

recurrence of a certain number of them. In the same manner, the moral character which I now possess, and which determines the ethical quality of my present actions, is the combined result of a long series of thoughts, feelings, and actions, many of which have passed entirely out of my consciousness and many more which can be recollected only with great difficulty. But all these facts are, in a sense, present with me in their effect, *i. e.* my character, and if I now suffer in consequence of sins committed before but now forgotten, or enjoy the fruits of righteous conduct equally forgotten, I do not feel myself wronged in the one case or specially favoured in the other. In sound, dreamless sleep, again, the facts of life beat a complete retreat from the field of consciousness and leave it utterly empty so far as its individual manifestation is concerned; but they are by no means lost in consequence of this disappearance, and do not cease to determine waking life. Now, if we consider the question of a possible existence before our present life in the light of the facts just mentioned, we shall see that many of the objections felt against its possibility are groundless. That we have, at present, no recollection of any such state of existence, does not prove that it will never come back to our memory. For aught we know, its re-appearance may be waiting for conditions to be hereafter fulfilled. And, even if it should so happen that these facts will not recur to us under any circumstances, it does not follow that they are not unconsciously determining our present life. We are born with definite intellectual and moral characters.



Circumstances do not act upon empty minds and souls, equal and identical in their blankness, but upon clearly defined mental powers and moral tendencies with infinite differences in quality and quantity. If, in mature life, all formations, either intellectual or moral, demand a history, an explanation in the form of a series of previous actions, and all differences a difference of history, does not the complexity and variety of endowments with which life begins demand a similar explanation, a similar history projected into the unknown past? Again, when the joys and sorrows of this life are sought to be explained by our conduct in a past state of existence, it is objected that neither joy nor sorrow can justly be attributed to actions which we cannot remember to have done. Seeing that in our present life we constantly lose and gain in consequence of actions which we have utterly forgotten, but which nevertheless have left lasting effects on our character, the unreasonableness of the objection will be evident. And, after all, the few years during which we live in forgetfulness of our past lives may be, in proportion to the actual span of our existence, a much shorter period than are our hours of dreamless sleep in relation to the total extent of our present life. The alleged recollection of previous states of existence by many persons, characterized by uncommon purity of heart, is a subject which we simply mention and pass by; its discussion would be beyond the scope of this little treatise.

We have already said that the complexity of our minds even at the time of our birth point to a fore-going

mental life as its explanation. We have now to add that the theory of evolution, now so widely accepted, seems distinctly to militate against the current supposition that the human mind is the work of about nine months' time. The human body has an almost incalculably longer history behind it. Its present form, with its nice adaptations and its wonderful capacity for multiplying itself, is the result of a series of evolutions extending through millions of years, during which it has passed through innumerable lower and tentative forms. It is a law of Nature that the time required for the evolution of an organism is long in proportion to its richness, niceness and complexity. The human mind, then, the richest, nicest and most complex of organisms, far from taking only nine months for its formation, would require a much longer period than any physical or physiological structure whatever. The theory of the transmission of acquired powers from father to son cannot, it seems, go further than explaining the superior richness and adaptability of the organisms with which succeeding generations are favoured, compared with those possessed by their ancestors. The net result of experience, the acquired niceness of the organism, its fitness for higher action and thought, may be, as it is said to be, transmitted to its reproductions. But unless the favoured organisms are occupied by superior minds, unless the laws that govern physiological evolution are acknowledged as obtaining in the spiritual world also, the current theory of transmitted experience does not seem sufficient to explain the complexity and variety of the human soul

at its birth. The direct transmission of powers from one soul to another, and the origin of the soul of the child from that of the father—suppositions which underlie current thinking on the subject—are theories without any rational grounds whatever, and are hardly even conceivable. On the other hand, the analogy of physiological evolution points to a parallel process of spiritual evolution, the gradual development of souls by experience gathered in each life, and their re-birth in fresh lives, the extent of their development determining the quality of the organisms occupied by them. In these re-incarnations, the souls may be conceived to carry with them the result of their previous experiences, with their details dropped from memory, but the substantial progress in intellectual and moral power uninterrupted and ready to determine, and be increased by fresh experience.

That the moral and spiritual growth of souls is the main object of creation, is a conclusion at which we arrive from a consideration of man's capabilities and his relation to Nature. That this spiritual end of creation, our faith in which is confirmed by every growth in inner life, supplies one of the strongest arguments for the soul's immortality, need not be dwelt upon here, as our present purpose is not to prove immortality, but re-incarnation, immortality being admitted as a fact. Re-incarnation seems to us to be the most probable form of immortality. The conditions of ethical progress would apparently be absent in a disembodied existence. The ethical life must be social. There is neither morality nor spirituality for an isolated being. Virtue is indeed

personal, individual. There is no meaning in the purity of a society in which the individuals are not pure. But the purity of individuals and their continued growth in righteousness imply their inclusion in a society of which the members owe duties to one another, and in which a free exchange of thoughts and sentiments and active co-operation in good work are possible. These things are inconceivable in a state of existence in which souls are disembodied, for it is through our bodies that we are able to communicate with one another. The very conditions of that spiritual life, then, which makes immortality necessary and desirable, require that souls should be re-born either in this very world or in others more or less similar to this.

The current conception of re-incarnation is that souls continue to be re-born till they have fully known Brahman, when they are united to or absorbed in him and are no more re-incarnated. But the Sastras distinctly speak of persons who, though delivered from the bondage of *avidya* and united to God, continue in an embodied state, and are again and again re-born for serving their kind. It is only those who have no duties imposed upon them that cease from being re-incarnated. If the error of supposing souls to be fully enlightened and yet to have no duties could be seen, the exception to re-birth just mentioned would not, we think, be made. The *Bhagavadgītā* represents the highest of human incarnations as saying that though he has no wants, and therefore no duties, (*i.e.* duties to himself,) he is yet working for the good of the world. When the most enlight-

ened of souls is said to have duties to perform, and to have voluntarily re-incarnated himself, why should any other person consider himself as above duties and above the necessity of re-birth. God, whether in flesh or out of it, is ever-active, and those who are united to him cannot but be active like him. They must be his co-workers,—conscious instruments in his hands for the divine task of making this earth a veritable *Brahma-loka*. The world cannot spare those who have spiritually risen above it and become one with God, and they also can no more forget it than the Divine Being himself. It is therefore unreasonable to suppose that the selfish state of isolation or *kaivalya* is the highest goal of emancipated souls. It seems to us rather a veritable state of bondage.

We shall, however, return to the subject of bondage and deliverance in another essay.



## THE ETHICS OF THE UPANISHADS.

The ethics of the *Sanhitās* and the *Brāhmanas* may be roughly characterised as hedonistic. They prescribe domestic and social duties, penances and sacrifices, and promise pleasure here or hereafter as their reward. Their criterion of duty, the end of existence with them, is pleasure; they see nothing higher. The worshippers of the one infinite God must have felt very early the insufficiency of this view of life for the higher needs of the soul. They must have felt after something higher, something intrinsically good, and not good merely for the pleasure derived from it. In the *Kāthopanishad*, probably one of the earliest of the Upanishads, we already find the distinction between the pleasant and the good clearly laid down. Mrityu says to his interlocutor, Nachiketa:—“The good is one thing, the pleasant another. These two bind man in different ways. He who accepts the good obtains true well-being, and he who prefers the pleasant loses his highest good.”

The good consists in seeking the Absolute, the Infinite, the Souls of souls. He is the true Self of all. Every one should try to know him and be united to him. The search after Brahman, the Absolute Self, comes out as the one absolute duty, the substance of which all other duties are only forms. The Divine or absolute standpoint, the consciousness of unity with Brahman, becomes the criterion of right, the measure with which the value of all actions is to be measured, the ideal con-

dition in which there is no sin, no sorrow. "He who sees all things in the Self," says the *Isopanishad*, "and the Self in all things, hence hates no body." Again: "When all things have become the wise man's self, where is illusion and where is sorrow to him who sees unity?" The Being with whom unity was thus sought, and unity with whom constituted the ideal of perfection, is not, with our theologians, a purely intellectual Being, far less a mere metaphysical abstraction of Being, as is sometimes represented by superficial critics. He is, to them, a moral Being, a Person, of perfectly holy will, the Teacher, Guide and Saviour of finite souls. "That Person," says the *Svetasvatara*, is the Great Lord; he is the mover of the heart, the Guide to the holy, supreme place, and an inexhaustible Light." (III. 12.) Man is saved, says the same *Upanishad*, "by perceiving him in the soul who is the Giver of holiness, the Destroyer of sin, the Lord of glory, the Immortal, the Support of all things."

This view of Nature and life, at once metaphysical and ethical, revolutionizes previous ethics—the ethics of selfishness. The real self of man is not individual, but universal. It is therefore wrong merely to seek individual satisfaction. The pursuit of selfish desires obstructs the true vision of the soul and impedes its union with the Absolute. The old religion of penances and sacrifices was therefore condemned, or retained only as a lower discipline calculated to divert the mind from the grosser pleasures of the visible world and draw it to supramundane objects. The *Mundakopanishad*, after speaking of sacrifice as a duty, says: "These boats

in the form of sacrifices, consisting of eighteen members (*i. e.* sixteen priests, the performer of the sacrifice and his wife), in which the lower duty has been prescribed, are weak. Those who commend this (*i. e.* this lower duty) as the good, become subject to old age and death again. Those who are ignorant, and yet consider themselves as wise and learned, those fools suffer much and wander like blind people led by the blind. (I. *Mundaka*, II. 7, 8.)

Though the lower code of duties was not altogether discarded, the motives to which it appealed was condemned uncompromisingly. The rites and ceremonies prescribed in the old code may be performed, but it must be done without any desire for reward here or hereafter. They should be performed merely as purificatory disciplines or as means of showing respect to the gods. The same unselfish motive, the same sense of duty for duty's sake, should guide the performance of domestic and social duties. The object of all is to purify the heart, to discipline the mind, to bring all the propensities of the soul under the control of Reason. The natural, lower life of man, which is under the guidance of the senses and the intellect, takes no cognizance of the higher life open to Reason alone,—the life in union with God. Hence the reign of Reason is to be established both within and without, in the inner life of thoughts, feelings and desires, and the outer one of practical conduct. "He whose charioteer is Reason," says the *Katha*, and 'whose reins the *manas*, reaches the end of the path, the highest position of the All-pervading." "When all the desires," says



the same Upanishad, "that have taken hold of man's heart are destroyed, then he becomes immortal, and obtains Brahman even here."

In accordance with this ideal, even those just begin the study of the Upanishads,—the very initiates into the higher code of life represented by them,—were made to adopt certain disciplines, some habits of thinking and acting which were gradually defined and laid down under the name of the *sādhana chatushtaya*, the four-fold discipline. These are *nityānitya vastuviveka*, the discrimination of things permanent and transitory; *iḥāmūtra-phala-bhogavirāga*, non-attachment to the rewards of actions, earthly or heavenly; *samādānādi-sādhana-sampat*, disciplines beginning with *sama* and *dama*; and *mumukshutvam*, the desire for deliverance. The disciplines classed under the third head are *sama*, the drawing away of the mind from things earthly; *dama*, the restraining of the external senses; *uparati*, giving up, for the sake of attaining the higher knowledge, the duties prescribed in the lower code; *titikṣhā*, patiently bearing the sufferings caused by heat, cold &c; *samādhānam*, the concentration of the mind in higher things by giving up sleepiness and laziness; and *śraddhā*, faith in all higher things.\*

The strong tendency to monastic life which is visible among certain classes of Vedantists, and which finds expression in Vedantic writings of post-Buddhist times, is conspicuous by its absence in the Upanishads. There

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\* Sankara's commentary on the first aphorism of the *Vedānta-Sūtras* and Govindānanda's annotations on the commentary.

are, indeed, isolated passages, here and there, in which monastic life is prescribed or praised, but most of the writers show a delightful contentment with domestic life and many ignore the very existence of monasticism as a part of the routine of life. Here, for instance, are two outline views of the principal duties of life in which there is no mention of monastic seclusion even at the last stage of life. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, a Vedic teacher, at the end of his lecture on the Vedas, thus instructs his pupil in the duties of life :—"Speak the truth. Practice virtue. Do not neglect the study of the Vedas. Having paid his honourarium to your preceptor, (*i. e.* having returned home at the close of your studies) do not cut off the line of children, (*i. e.* do marry and bring up a family). Do not swerve from the truth. Do not swerve from virtue. Do not swerve from the good. Be not indifferent to the attainment of greatness. Do not neglect your duties to the gods and to your parents. Honour your mother as a god. Honour your father as a god. Honour your preceptor as a god. Honour your guest as a god. Do those deeds which are commendable, and not those which are otherwise. Imitate our good deeds, and not those which are otherwise. Those Brahmanas who are superior to us should be honoured by you with seats (on their coming to our house). Give alms with a willing heart. Do not give with an unwilling heart. Give wisely. Give with modesty. Give with fear (of God). Give with a sympathetic heart. If you feel any doubt about rites or practical morals, follow, in much matters, those wise, pure-hearted and pious Brahmanas, whether

employed or unemployed, who live in the neighbourhood. As to those rites or morals which are condemned by some, follow, in such matters, those wise, pure-hearted and pious Brahmanas, whether employed or unemployed, who live in the neighbourhood. This is the commandment. This is the precept. This is the purport of the Vedas. This is the direction. This should be done. This should be followed."

The *Chhândogya Upanishad* closes with the following summary of life's duties:—"One who studies the Veda at his preceptor's house according to rule, and does his duty to the preceptor completely, and then returning home, settles as a householder, and sitting in a clean place, studies the Veda and initiates sons or pupils into pious lives, who devotes all his senses to the Self and refrains from giving pain to any creature except in sacred places (where some pain must be caused in the shape of asking for alms), a person living in the stated manner reaches the world of Brahman at the close of his life, and does not return, does not return." It is curious that this significant passage was, in later times, tortured by the extreme defenders of monasticism into meaning that the life of a householder is intended for those only who merely read the Vedas but do not understand their purport!

The great Yájnavalkya, who lived as a householder, but who seems to have retired to the forest at an advanced age, gives utterance to some very valuable thoughts on the way in which one should live as a domestic and social being,—on the place of human affections

in relation to the love of God. Maitreyī, one of his two wives, having refused to be contented with the offer of mere earthly treasures at the time of Yājñavalkya's retirement, and asked for instruction on the life eternal, he is overjoyed and compliments her by saying, "You are surely dear to me, but you have increased my love for you (by asking this question.)" He then goes on: "Surely, the husband is not dear for the sake of the husband, but for the Self is the husband dear. Surely, the wife is not dear for the sake of the wife, but for the sake of the Self is the wife dear. Surely, sons are not dear for the sake of sons, but for the sake of the Self are sons dear." In the same way, Yājñavalkya speaks of riches, domestic animals, the worlds, the gods, the Vedas, the creatures, and all things generally as dear not for their own sake, but for the sake of the Self. That this Self is not our small individuality, the central point of hedonistic ethics, but the infinite, universal Self, the common self of all, appears from what follows this enumeration of finite things that are dear to us. On the knowledge of this Self, says Yājñavalkya, all things are known. Those who suppose anything to be out of the Self are forsaken by all things, *i. e.* are in utter darkness as to their nature. "These gods," says the teacher in unmistakable terms, "these Vedas, all these creatures, all this is the Self." The love of God, then, is the object to be realized by all domestic and social duties.

The spirit in which man should be served,—that every service rendered to man is really rendered to God,—will appear from the following parable in the *Chhândogya*

*Upanishad*, which reminds one of Christ's words in speaking of the last judgment—"Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "When Saunaka of the family of Kapi," says the *Upanishad*, and Abhipratâri of the family of Kakshasena, were being served in their meals, an anchorite begged alms of them, but they did not give him anything. He said, 'There is a God who devours the four great gods; he is the Preserver of the world. O you of the family of Kapi, O Abhipratârin, mortals do not see him who exists in many forms. Him for whom all this food is being prepared, you have not given it.' Then Saunaka of the family of Kapi meditated, and approaching the anchorite, said, "The Creator of the gods and the other creatures, he whose teeth are indestructible, he who eats all things, who is wise,—those who know him declare his great glory—he who, not eaten by any one else, eats all,—we, O anchorite, worship him. (Then, addressing his servants he said), 'Give him alms.' Then they give him alms."

There are, in the *Upanishads*, certain passages of doubtful import which have sometimes been made too much of by the opponents of Hindu philosophy. These passages seem to mean, to the superficial reader, that there is really no distinction between virtue and vice, and that one who has known Brahman is at liberty to do whatever he likes. Now, if such passages occurred in works which were elsewhere silent on or indifferent to morals, the construction put on them by the critics in question would be unobjectionable. In that case the

immoral tendency of the passages would not admit of any doubt. But occurring, as they do, in works the writers of which call upon their readers, at every turn, to abjure wicked deeds and desires, and who would not be contented with anything short of the utter eradication of egotism and an unbroken union with the All-holy, it seems little short of perversity to represent them, as some have done, as indications of an unholy libertinism resulting from a certain philosophical extravagance. To one who would not shut his eyes against the rigorous course of moral and spiritual discipline prescribed everywhere in the Upanishads, these passages would seem to admit of the following explanation. In the first place, they are protests against the selfish motives that dictate popular morality—the desire for obtaining reward and avoiding punishment which is fostered by the *Karmakānda* of the Veda itself. By saying that the wise man, he who knows God, avoids both virtue and vice, the Upanishads mean that that such a man rises above popular morality, above the desire for reward and the fear of punishment. Secondly, these passages indicate the purely impersonal attitude to which the mind is raised by conscious union with God, an attitude so far above all considerations of personal gain and loss, and so perfectly at one with the Universal, that if one were to do even an apparently sinful act from such a standpoint, no sin would or should be imputed to him. This does not mean that good and bad deeds are all the same, but that, as the motives that dictate sinful acts to ordinary mortals—the motives in which the sinfulness of the acts consists—are absent in the person

living in constant union with God, he cannot be said to incur sin even if he does such acts. In this case, there would be no sinful motive, and hence no imputation of sin. Thirdly, such expressions, expressions of the absence of difference, even the difference between virtue and vice, are intended to emphasise the fundamental unity,—the unity of God—underlying all things. Such a passage—a very striking one—is that which is seen in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*, IV. 3. 21, 22, in which the soul of the devotee, embraced by the Infinite, is said to see no inside and outside, and to it, a father becomes no-father, a mother no-mother, a thief no-thief and so on. Such expressions are intended not to ignore differences, but to emphasise the underlying unity in which all things, however great their differences, rest and are in that sense one. The same purpose, that of emphasising the fundamental unity of all things, finds expression in another form, in the form of a trustful contentment with life as a whole, notwithstanding our moral failures and disappointments,—a contentment arising from the faith that the final disposal of things is in the hands of God, in whose all-seeing eyes there is no absolute evil, and who makes even evil the stepping-stone to good. It is such faith that seems to have dictated the passage, for instance, at the end of the third valli of the *Tiattiriya Upanishad*, in which the writer disparages vain regrets and says that one who knows the unspeakable bliss of Brahman satisfies himself by looking at both virtue and vice from the standpoint of the Self.

It must however be confessed that there are one or

two passages in the *Chhândogya* and the *Brihadâranyaka* to which the explanation just given does not apply, and the admission of which into the *Upanishads* is really a mystery unless we attribute it to a certain oversight of the early compilers. We refer to section 13 of the second prapâthaka of the *Chhândogya* and parts of the fourth Brâhmana, Chapter VI, of the *Brihadâranyaka*. The passages are diametrically opposed to the whole spirit of the *Upanishads* and it is incredible that they could be composed by any one really connected with the movement represented by them. The *Upanishads* named as well as some others are evidently compilations and ~~and contain~~ portions of varying spiritual worth. Besides, the section of the *Brihadâranyaka* in which the passage in question occurs—and it occurs there in a far more objectionable form than in the *Chhândogya*—is evidently a later addition. The whole tenour of the section, apart from the particular passage referred to, suggests a certain lowness of taste and the prevalence of superstition and ritualism. It would not perhaps be far from the truth, therefore, to fix its composition at a time when the tide of old spirituality had ebbed away, and it had become possible for persons who would be disowned by the old rishis to step occasionally into their holy seats.

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## BONDAGE AND DELIVERANCE.

"In the beginning, my dear, there was that only which is, one only without a second.....It thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth fire. That fire (*i.e.* the One in the form of fire) thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth water...Water thought, may I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth earth... That being (*i.e.* that which had produced fire, water and earth) thought, let me now enter those three beings with this living self, and let me reveal names and forms." (*Chhândogya Upanishad*, sixth prapàthaka, second and third khandas). From the above account of creation, and similar other accounts in the Upanishads, all more or less poetic, as such accounts must needs be, but all containing a substratum of truth, it will be seen, that however mysterious a thing creation may be, however difficult it may be to conceive its real nature, the writers of the Upanishads all believe in its reality. They, indeed, never lose sight of the principle that, in creation, nothing was produced that was apart from Brahman, nothing that constituted a real duality. But that there has been a change in some sense or other, or, to be more exact, that change in one sense or other is real, real in the sense of being an object of the Divine knowledge, an effect of the Divine power,—of this, the founders of Hindu Theism seem to have not the slightest doubt. It is true that the *Svetâsvatara Upanishad*,—the only one of the twelve principal Upanishads,—calls nature

by the significant name of Mâyâ. But except using this much misunderstood term, the writer of the *Upanishad* says nothing as to the unreality of Nature, but is, throughout his description of creation, as realistic as the writers of the other Upanishads. The later form of the Mâyâ theory, namely that creation is unreal, and our belief in it due to ignorance, is quite unknown to the founders of our theology, and is to be credited, not to them, but to some of their commentators and expounders. We do not know, however, of any one who has ever held the theory without contradicting himself. Belief in creation or change, it says, is due to ignorance. Well, this ignorance then, must belong to a finite being. This finite being, therefore, whether he be a man, a god, or the great Hiranyagarbha himself, must first be created in order that his ignorance may be possible. His creation would, therefore, be a change not due to his or any one else's ignorance, but a fact related to the Divine knowledge itself. Even if the finite being conceived were supposed to be co-eternal with, though dependent on the Supreme Being, the succession of ideas in his mind, that in which the life of a finite being consists—his progress from relative ignorance to knowledge, even the apparent changes fancied by him,—would constitute a series of changes of which the All-knowing Being must be conceived as cognizant and which would, in that sense, be real, objective changes, and not such as are due to the ignorance of a finite being. Creation, then, including the creation of finite souls, is not due to ignorance. The individualization of Brahman in the form of finite spirits,

his entrance, in the language of the *Chhândogya*, into finite materials as the living soul of men and other beings, is an occurrence due to the Divine activity and irrespective of the ignorance inseparable from the conditions of finite life.

Our existence as individuals, then, if it is not the result of ignorance, cannot be put an end to by any amount of knowledge, either of things earthly or heavenly, that we may acquire. It is not a "bondage" from which we can be delivered by any spiritual disciplines, however rigorous, or indeed one from which we need to be delivered. Nor does deliverance from it really mean anything, unless it be utter annihilation. Such annihilation, even if it were possible to effect it, would be something of which 'deliverance' would be the least appropriate name possible, for 'deliverance' implies the continued existence of the thing delivered, and its change from a lower to a higher state of existence.

Bondage and deliverance, then, whatever else they may mean, do not surely mean the existence of finite souls and their subsequent annihilation in consequence of the attainment of enlightenment by them. Their beginning to exist, we repeat, is not caused by their ignorance, and their annihilation, therefore, cannot be effected by the attainment of enlightenment on their part.

We shall dispose of another false view of bondage and deliverance before we see what they really are. Bondage does not consist in incarnation or even re-incarnation—in the mere fact of having a body. Deliverance may be obtained even when one continues to have

a body of flesh, and even saved souls who have once left their bodies may be, and have been, according to the Sástras, incarnated for the good of the world. Several persons who had attained to a consciousness of unity with Brahman and taught the science of God from that standpoint, are described in sacred literature as emancipated souls, and several who are represented as incarnations of God are said to have come again and again to the earth and taken upon them the burden of flesh in order to accomplish particular ends or the general purpose of uprooting vice and establishing virtue. On the other hand, souls that leave their gross bodies at death, and are, for the time being, disembodied, cannot be called emancipated merely for the fact of their being disembodied. Whether they are free or in bondage, depends upon the spiritual possessions with which they have left their bodies. The difference between a saved and an unsaved soul does not therefore consist in the one having a body and the other not having one. The mere presence or absence of the body is indifferent. The difference lies, as we shall see, in the way in which the body is looked at. The unsaved soul identifies itself with its body, and its desires are all more or less concerned with it, whereas the saved soul looks upon it as a mere instrument, and is above all carnal desires. Carnal desires are supposed, as they very well may be, to result necessarily in re-incarnations, whereas in the case of the spiritually minded, the saved, the resumption of a body is optional. Hence the mere having a body, the mere fact of re-incarnation, is often spoken of as a state of

bondage, and freedom from the necessity of re-incarnation, from the binding force of carnal desires that inevitably leads to re-embodiment, represented as a state of freedom. But this is only one aspect of the question, and we must try to have a full view of the subject.

The *Sveldsvatara Upanishad* describes bondage and deliverance in the following way:—"In that great Brahma-wheel, (*i.e.*, the world) in which all creatures live and rest, the traveller (*i.e.*, the finite soul) wanders; thinking himself to be different from the Ruler. When blessed by Him, he attains immortality." (I. 6.) Bondage, then, consists in thinking oneself different from God—as having a self of one's own different from the Supreme Self, and deliverance means freedom from this belief by the blessing of God. But the matter is not one of mere ignorance and knowledge in their purely intellectual aspects. One who identifies himself not with the Universal Self, but with this or that finite object, gross or fine, must necessarily be subject to desires connected with that object. He must wish for things that may satisfy himself. These things, again, in consequence of their intrinsic finitude and transitoriness, must either be often unobtainable, and thus cause disappointment to the person desiring them, or, even when obtainable, fail to give him full and lasting satisfaction. The state of bondage, therefore, is one not of mere ignorance, but also of suffering,—suffering caused by various passions and desires, and the state of deliverance, on the other hand, one of freedom from desires—desires for finite objects, and freedom from the suffering

caused by such desires. Bondage, again, is a state of sin. The consciousness of the Absolute, the Universal, that all conscious beings have, either in a distinct or indistinct form, dictates laws of conduct and claims the submission of all personal desires to these laws. It condemns selfishness and all thoughts, desires and actions that proceed from it. It urges us to rise to the Divine standpoint and look on all beings with an impartial eye. But the passions are all egoistic and seek for individual satisfaction. Thus there results a conflict, and the conflict, when the self-seeking desires prevail, gives rise to sin, for sin consists in the pursuit of a lower ideal in the presence of a higher, in seeking individual satisfaction at the cost of absolute, universal good, in following passion instead of Reason. Sin, therefore, constitutes one of the bonds of the soul, and the state of deliverance is one of holiness, freedom from sin. The scriptures, in their repeated exhortations on bondage and deliverance, dwell on all these aspects of the question,—sometimes on the one, sometimes on the other, and sometimes on some or all of them combined. They speak of bondage as consisting in the ignorance of the true Self, in desire, suffering and sin, and of the state of deliverance as one of unclouded self-knowledge resulting in freedom from desire, suffering and sin, and full of the lasting joy of self-realization, the consciousness of unity with Brahman. Thus the *Mundaka* says, “The fetter of the heart is broken, all doubts are resolved, and all his (*i. e.* the devotee’s) works perish, when he has seen him who is high and low, *i. e.* both cause and effect” (II. 2.

8.) "He who knows that highest Brahman," says the same *Upanishad*, "becomes Brahman himself. In his family, no one is born ignorant of Brahman. He overcomes suffering, he overcomes sin. Freed from the fetters of the heart, he becomes immortal." (III. 2. 9) The *Katha* says: "When he is freed from all those desires that dwell in his heart, the mortal becomes immortal, and obtains Brahman even here." (VI. 15.) Says the *Svetâsvatara*: "Immersed in that tree (*i. e.* identifying himself with his body), and bewildered, man suffers out of impotence. When he sees the other, the blessed Lord, and his glory, he becomes free from suffering." (IV. 7). The *Bṛihadâraṇyaka* says: "He that knows it, after having become quiet, subdued, satisfied, patient and collected, sees the Self in himself, and all things in the Self. Sin does not overcome him, he overcomes all sin. Sin does not torment him, he torments, *i. e.* destroys all sin. He becomes a Brâhmana, free from sin, free from desire, free from doubt. This is the Brahma-world, O Emperor. Thus spoke Yâjñavalkya." (IV. 4. 23).

The supreme place given to knowledge,—the knowledge of God as our true self,—in the Vedantic scheme of salvation, is easily explicable when knowledge is understood to be not mere intellectual, inferential knowledge, but a state of lasting enlightenment—a never-failing light illumining all departments of conscious life—colouring the sensuous perceptions, guiding the judgments, touching the feelings, controlling the desires, and determining the decisions of Conscience. On analysing sinful desires and actions, the absence of true self-knowledge,—

an erroneous identification of the self with a finite object instead of the Absolute,—will be found at the root of all. Thus, when we are seized with a desire for sensuous pleasures, we, for the time being, identify ourselves with the senses and seek to satisfy ourselves by satisfying them. Then, in a fit of anger, for instance, in which we desire pain or ruin to the object of anger, there is, at the bottom, an erroneous abstraction of the self of the offending person from our own selves. On a similar offence committed by ourselves, or even by any one dear to us, we would not consider the offender to be deserving of anything worse than compassion and mercy. The impossibility of having these feelings in the case imagined is due to the non-recognition of the fundamental unity of self between the offending and the offended. Again, in the case of pride, to take another instance, when we are puffed up by our own achievements—by the praise that men choose to heap on us,—what causes this vain self-glorification but a most erroneous notion that the individual thing I call my self is, with all the intellectual and moral attainments, all the thoughts, feelings and actions that make it up, an independent reality—something apart from the Being that perpetually sustains and manifests himself in the form of all individual life? In the sphere of purely devotional life also, it is this erroneous view of things, it is our thinking of God as something apart from us, and not as the very Self of our selves, that dries up all higher emotions and makes devotional exercises an empty show or an unprofitable toil to the soul. On the other hand, in proportion as we learn to identify our-



selves with the Self of all, to find our true self in him, sensuous desires, angry, vindictive and censorious feelings towards others, self-glorification and self-indulgence, not to speak of darker and grosser sins,—all become more and more impossible, and from trying to satisfy the tiny sensuous or merely intellectual thing that we call our self in our unenlightened state, we come to seek the satisfaction of the larger Self with which we learn to identify ourselves—the realization of the Divine perfection in the collective life of all rational beings.

This enlargement of the self, in which deliverance consists, involves, it is evident, a negative, destructive process. It involves the renunciation, both intellectually and practically, of the false self. While, before the attainment of true self-knowledge, there seem to be as many selves as there are individual lives, it is seen, when enlightenment dawns upon the soul, that there is only one Self in all, only one subject illumining and containing all objects, gross and fine. In the language of the *Brihadâranyaka Upanishad*, "There is no seer but this, there is no perceiver but this, there is no knower but this." (III. 7. 23) Or, as the Divine Being says in the *Bhagavad-gîtâ*, "O Bhârata, know myself as the subject (kshetrajna) in all objects (kshetras)." There is a sense, therefore, in which the attainment of emancipation is the destruction of the individual self, *i. e.* of that figment of a self which the unenlightened intellect of the natural man erroneously conceives as existing independently of the Supreme Self. On the attainment of true self knowledge, it is seen that there is no such thing really existing,

but that it is the universal, cosmic Self that shines as the self of all finite beings—that manifests itself through those thoughts, feelings and volitions that we call our own. There is, then, something to be renounced, something to be destroyed, in order that the individual may be united to the Universal. There is really something to be merged and lost in Brahman. But it is only a figment, only an appearance, something that seems real to the blurred vision of the unenlightened man, but has no existence for enlightened Reason. It is this, and not any real object, that is merged and lost in God, who is seen to be All-in-all.

When the reality of this destructive process in salvation,—the annihilation of the false self of ignorance—is seen, one begins to understand those obscure utterances in the scriptures which seem at first to indicate that utter annihilation of conscious individual life, which, at the beginning of this essay, we have seen to be opposed both to Reason and to the teachings of the *Ūpanishads*. These utterances evidently describe the change that comes over the worshipper when, with the dawn of true self-knowledge, he begins to consciously live the free, universal life of Brahman,—feels constrained to renounce that false independence with which he was beguiled while he was under the influence of *avidyā*. Thus the remarkable passage at the close of the *Mundakopaniṣad*, which at first sight reads very much like a description of the utter annihilation of individual existence, may be very well interpreted as indicating the purely spiritual change spoken of above. “Those anchorites who have,”

says the *Upanishad*, "known well the object (*i. e.* Brahman) of the science of the Vedânta, who have purified their hearts by means of renunciation,—they all, obtaining the highest immortality, become free in the Brahma-worlds at the time of the great end." Thus far there is no talk of annihilation, but only a promise of salvation in the highest sense for those who are pure in heart. But the *Upanishad* goes on : "Their fifteen parts go to their sources ; their senses all go to their corresponding divine powers ; their deeds and their intellectual self become all one with the Highest, the Unchangeable." "The fifteen parts" are the five senses, the five organs of action and the five vital powers. They all go, we are told, to their sources ; the five senses, it is repeated, go to their divine powers, *i. e.*, the eye to the sun, by whose aid it performs its function ; the ear to the air, which makes hearing possible ; and so on. Now, what does this "going" on the part of the organs mean ? It may mean their dissolution and return to their original substances. But it may also mean the attainment, on the part of the worshipper, a true knowledge of their dependence on the powers of Nature and the consequent destruction of egotism. The acquirement of a correct knowledge of the Vedânta, which the writer has spoken of as a condition of deliverance, involves the destruction of that false notion of independence to which the natural man is subject, the notion that we, with all that we possess, are independent of the Divine Power. By emphasising the unity underlying all difference, the Vedânta lays the axe at the root of this egotism, and makes us feel, at the first

instance, that our bodies are only parts of Nature, and that the performance of their different functions by the different senses, organs and vital powers depends on the constant action on them of the powers of Nature, which are nothing but the powers of God. Gradually, it is seen that what we call 'our actions' have for their ultimate cause the same Divine Power which makes the activities of Nature possible, and that our individual selves, the root of all egotism, are themselves reflections of the Highest Eternal Self, the Brahman. It is evidently the revelation of this highest truth to the soul of which the *Mundaka* speaks in the *mantra* quoted above. The same seems to be the purport of the verse that follows, though it apparently bears a different import. "As flowing rivers," says the *Upanishad*, "disappear in the sea, losing their name and form, so a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the Divine Person who is greater than the great." The figure is likely to mislead; but it is only a figure and must not be strained. When once the inward change that comes with enlightenment becomes familiar to the mind, the figure itself does not seem to be an inapt one. The enlightened soul feels that it is not different from the Infinite, but one with it,—that names and forms are unreal when looked at from the Divine standpoint, that individuality does not really separate us, as it seems to do, from the Universal,—that the Divine Being is all-in-all. This consciousness of unity with God as a spiritual fact, could scarcely be expressed by a better figure than that of the ocean as comprehending all waters in its all-em-

bracing unity. The conscious subsumption of individual existence, the renunciation of egotism, is not inaptly represented by the flowing of the river into the sea. The individual mind, so long as it thinks itself different from the universal, so long as it is bound by banks of egotistic ignorance, is like a river bound by steep banks on both sides. When the finite feels itself to be one with the Infinite, feels that the same undivided consciousness is universal in one aspect and individual in another, it becomes like a river mixing its water with the water of the sea. That the writer who used this figure did not contemplate the annihilation of individuality, seems clear also from the *mantra* that follows. If annihilation had been what he intended to teach, he should have stopped at the *mantra* just quoted, for, what more can possibly be said of one who, as an individual, has ceased to exist? But the writer goes on speaking of the emancipated soul in the following terms:—"He who knows that highest Brahman becomes even Brahman. In his race no one is born ignorant of Brahman. He passes beyond sorrow, he passes beyond sin; freed from the fetters of the heart, he becomes immortal." A teacher of annihilation could scarcely have closed his subject with words like the above.

There are, however, one or two obscure texts in the *Brihadhranyaka Upanishad*, which do not seem to admit of the explanation given above, and the writer of which seems to have held the doctrine of individual annihilation. For instance, the passage about the close of the fourth Brahmana of chapter II of the *Upanishad*, which

runs thus, "When he has departed, there is no more knowledge," and which seems to have startled the lady for whose edification it was uttered, appears to teach the total extinction of consciousness. But the explanation that follows makes the import of the passage somewhat doubtful. Read in its light, it seems only to emphasise the ultimate unity of consciousness, denying the existence of an opposed subject and object in perfect self-realisation. But even after the explanation, the meaning of the passage remains obscure. A similar obscurity attaches to a few other passages in the same *Upanishad*, perhaps the product of the same writer, which liken deliverance to the state of dreamless sleep, a state in which difference is only potential and not actual. If that is the meaning of deliverance, it is, of course, nearly if not quite equivalent to annihilation. But in these passages also, it is perhaps the intention of the writer to emphasise the ultimate unity rather than teach the negative and destructive character of the state of emancipation. These exceptional passages are, however, clearly opposed to the general spirit of the *Upanishads*, and to passages of unmistakable import teaching the continuance of individuality in the state of final union with Brahman. We shall consider some of these passages and also see what the author of the *Vedānta Sūtras* understood by them.

In speaking of the future of the pious, the Upanishads inculcate two very different destinations for them according to the nature of the disciplines they have passed through. The followers of the karmakāṇḍa, those whose

worship consists in offering sacrifices to the gods, are destined for the *pitrilokas*, the habitations of the manes, where they pass through a way figuratively described as consisting of a number of phenomenal objects such as mist, dark nights, clouds &c. Through this way they pass to the moon, which either contains the *pitrilokas* or is associated with them. There they dwell in enjoyment of the fruits of their good works until they are spent out, when they have to retrace their steps to the earth and be re-born according to their merits. On the other hand, the followers of the *jñanakānda*, the spiritual worshippers of the Infinite, are destined for the *Brahmaloka*, the world of God. They also have to follow a particular path called the *devayāna*. This also consists of a number of elements which are altogether more auspicious than those composing the *pitriyāna*. The most prominent are the rays of the sun, which perhaps represent spiritual enlightenment. The elements named are, by some expounders, interpreted as mere symbols of the divine persons escorting the disembodied spirit to its destination. There is, of course, nothing irrational in the idea of a soul reaching its final goal with the help of advanced spirits. Under its glorious escort, however, the spirit reaches the house of God. As to the contents of that house the Upanishads are generally very brief. Nor do they, as a rule, enter into details as to the conditions of life there. They are mostly content with the statement that the spirit lives there in perfect beatitude, and does not return from it to any mundane state of existence. But some of them, and pre-

eminently the *Kaushitaki*, dwells upon what takes place there when the soul approaches the divine mansions. We need not reproduce these details. We simply refer the inquisitive reader to Chapter I. of the *Upanishad* named. One thing only deserves particular mention. It is the soul's declaration of unity with the Divine Being in answer to the question put by Brahman himself as to what it knows about its own nature. This declaration leaves no doubt that it is of the highest class of devotees that the Scriptures deal with in these figurative yet most significant descriptions. However, it is said that after this declaration has been made, to the full satisfaction, as one may suppose, of the Divine Teacher, the soul lives for everlasting years in the heavenly mansion in union with Brahman and in company of the gods and other emancipated spirits. Now, it is remarkable that in connexion with these descriptions, which avowedly treat of the final goal of those who have passed through the highest order of discipline, no assertions are made as to any higher destination reserved for a higher class of devotees. The *Chhândogya*, for instance, actually closes where one of these descriptions ends. It says not a word which may indicate that the state of existence described by it is the reward of a lower discipline and that there is a higher discipline for which this life in union with Brahman, with an unresolved element of difference, is an inadequate return, and that the only sufficient reward for that higher culture is the utter annihilation of individual existence. But this is exactly the view taken by Sankara. Ac-



According to him the goal described is not the Supreme, but the Lower Brahman, Hiranyagarbha, and the worshippers referred to are not those of the highest class, those who have known the supreme unity, but rather those who worship God as a Being distinct from them. For the worshippers of the highest class there is no passage to pass through and no place to reach. They are merged in God without any the slightest difference. The followers of the lower discipline, on the other hand, reach the world of the conditioned Brahman and live there as long as the world lasts and are merged in the Supreme Brahman, along with the object of their worship, at the end of the cycle. For these doctrines Sankara adduces the following arguments:—

1. The Supreme Brahman is not far from any one of us; it is our very self. There is, therefore, no meaning in 'reaching it.'
2. It being our very self, there is no meaning in passing through a particular way in order to reach it.
3. The conditioned Brahman being finite, reaching it and following a particular way to it, are quite reasonable in its reference.
4. The Scriptures expressly declare that the *prāṇas* (vital powers) of the highest class of devotees do not pass to any other sphere. This is clear from what is said in the sixth and seventh verses of the fourth Brahmana, Chapter IV. of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*. Now, Sankara's view does not seem us to be consistent with the teachings of the Upanishads; and it is well-known that Rāmānuja, the other great commentator of the *Prasthānatrayam* differs from him diametrically in his interpretation of the

relative texts. We shall briefly examine Sankara's arguments.

1. The Supreme Brahman, though it is our very self, has yet to be reached in a sense. We have to be freed from the influence of *avidyā* and all its baneful effects and be united to our true Self in knowledge, love and will. Even going to a particular place in connexion with the attainment of final emancipation is not an irrational idea. The partial realization of unity with God which most people attain in this world, may wait for translation into a more blessed region to attain fulness and permanence; and though God is not confined to any particular sphere, there may be a particular region inhabited by emancipated souls where the realisation of the Divine presence and blessedness is more easily attainable than elsewhere; so that the idea of a Brahmaloka in which God reveals himself more fully and vividly than in this world, is by no means inconsistent with the Divine infinitude. 2. Reaching God in a sense not being unmeaning, particular ways and means to attain this end are no more without meaning. The *devayāna* described in the Scriptures may be a purely spiritual process represented by material figures. But even if it represents an actual way to an actual world, such as we have described above, there is nothing unreasonable in its idea. If there is an actual Brahma-world to be reached, there must be a way to it. 3. If there be no meaning in reaching the Supreme Brahman because it is not far from any one of us, neither can there be any meaning in reaching the Lower Brah-

man ; for the latter also, as the sum of all conditioned existence, is near to every one of us. It is no more confined to a particular spot than the unconditioned Brahman. 4. The text of the *Bṛihadâraṇyaka* referred to does not seem to relate to the class of devotees spoken of by Sankara or point to any such state as he contemplates. Having said that the worshippers of the gods through sacrifices, the seekers after particular limited objects, return again and again from the happy regions reached by them as the result of their works, the *Upanishad* speaks of those who have no desires or who desire only the Infinite Self. For them, it says, there is no return. There is indeed something in the text which seems to indicate that the souls of this class of devotees do not follow any way and do not go anywhere. But the same class of devotees, the same disinterested seekers of Brahman, are spoken of in numerous other passages as following the *devayâna* path, so that this isolated passage, not very clear in its purport, cannot be accepted as a scriptural proof of Sankara's peculiar views.

We shall now see what view the author of the *Brahma-Sutras* takes of the subject. The last three *pâdas* of Chapter IV. of the *Sutras* are devoted to the exposition of the soul's passage to the *Brahmaloka* and its existence there. In the first of these *pâdas*, the second *pâda* of the Chapter, while expounding the mode in which the soul comes out of the body,—its condition in this disembodied state,—and starts for its final journey, the author incidentally notices the case of

those who, even in this life, attains the highest knowledge. On the authority of the text we have already referred to, he seems to take the view that souls of this class do not pass through the devayâna path, but directly attain unity with Brahman. As to those who travel through the devayâna, the author of the aphorisms seems to take the view that they have not obtained perfect emancipation, but that they do so when they arrive at the Brahmaloaka. In the third pâda of the Chapter, the devayâna is described in detail. The various phenomenal objects named in the Scriptures as forming the stages of the way are described by the Sutrakâra as so many spirits leading the half-unconscious soul to the Divine regions. The second half of this pâda is devoted to the discussion of the important question whether, through this path, the soul attains to the Higher or the Lower Brahman, or, in other words, whether the emancipation obtained by the soul is complete or incomplete. There is a peculiar circumstance which makes it difficult to ascertain the opinion of the Sutrakâra on the matter. He arrays the arguments on both sides of the question *pari passu*, but does not distinctly identify himself with any of the two opinions expressed. The substance of the discussion is simply this:—According to Bâdari, it is the Lower Brahman that is reached in this manner; according to Jaimîni, it is the Higher. Now, it is the uniform practice of the author of the aphorisms, whenever he has to controvert certain opinions, to state them first and give his own views last. From this, it would appear that, on the present question, he identifies himself

with Jaimini's views, which are put last, and this is the conclusion to which some commentators have actually come. But Sankara differs from these commentators and takes the opposite view. He identifies the Sutrakâra with Badari's views. The reason put forward for this procedure is that the other view, namely that the Supreme Brahman is reached by going through a passage, is unreasonable. We have already said that this alleged unreasonableness does not strike us as real. The infinitude of Brahman does not necessarily exclude a process through which he is reached by the finite soul. The Sutrakâra's opinion, however, on the question may be gathered with greater certainty in another way.

In the fourth pâda, which treats of the state of the emancipated soul, and in which the distinction of absolute and relative emancipation, as made by Sankara, might be expected to be dealt with, the distinction is not even spoken of, which proves that it has no place in the mind of the Sutrakâra. The state described is that of union with Brahman with an element of unresolved difference. According to Sankara, it is only one of relative emancipation—it is union with Hiranyagarbha, the Lower Brahman, and not with the Supreme. But the pâda does not speak of any higher state than what it describes. It begins and ends with this state of unity with difference; and its end is also the end of the whole system. It would, surely be, a strange procedure on the part of a theologian to close the exposition of his system without saying anything on what, according to him, is the final object of all human efforts, the highest

goal to be reached by the soul. We cannot charge the learned author of the *Brahma Sūtras* with this inconsistency, and therefore conclude that what Sankara calls relative emancipation,—union with God with an element of unresolved difference—is the only kind of emancipation taught by the *Sūtrakāra*. That in teaching this, the author of the aphorisms follows the main current of the teaching of the *Upanishads*, we have already seen. In confirmation of this conclusion, we shall examine the *pāda* referred to a little more closely.

In the first aphorism, it is taught that the soul, when it obtains the supreme light, appears in its true nature. The second teaches that such a soul is emancipated *i.e.*, from all kinds of evil. In the third, the light spoken of in the first aphorism is said to be nothing but the Self,—the Supreme Self. The fourth inculcates the undivided unity of the individual and the universal Self. The fifth notices Jaimini's view that the individual soul assumes a form similar to the universal. The sixth puts forward Audulomi's contention that as consciousness is the only form of the soul, other attributes are either based on or only figuratively imposed upon it. In the seventh, Bādarāyana suggests that the primary and secondary attributes of the soul are not mutually contradictory. The ninth contends that the emancipated soul is not subject to any one *i.e.*, not to any other individual soul, as appears from the context. The tenth record's Bādari's opinion that the saved soul has no body and organs. The eleventh puts forward Jaimini's argument that since the scriptures speak of the saved soul's assuming various forms, it has

a body and organs. In the twelfth, Bādarāyana opines that having or not having a body depends on the will of the emancipated soul. According to the thirteenth and the fourteenth, not having a body is comparable to a dreamy state, and having one to the waking state. The fifteenth shows how an emancipated soul can enter several bodies at once. The sixteenth raises and decides an important point. The author has admitted several elements of difference in the emancipated soul. But there are texts in the Upanishads which speak of a state of undifferentenced unity. Are not those texts opposed to the state of deliverance he is describing? He says, "No, for these texts refer to the state of dreamless sleep, or to *kaivalya*, and not to the state of deliverance we are describing." Now, Sankara here has an opportunity of saying, with a show of reason, that the state described in the pāda is only a state of relative emancipation, and that the state of *kaivalya* or undifferentenced unity recognized there is the higher goal reserved for the devotees of the highest class. The Sutrakāra of course says no such thing, but he leaves it uncertain what place the state of *kaivalya* occupies in his system. That for him there is no *higher* state than that described in this pāda, appears from the first and the fourth aphorism, which we have already explained. The unresolved difference which he admits in the state of deliverance is further emphasised in the aphorisms that follow. In the seventeenth, the author says that the emancipated soul obtains all powers except that of creating, sustaining and destroying the world. The eighteenth teaches that all powers are in

the hands of God, so that the emancipated soul is subject to him. The nineteenth contends that emancipated souls do not obtain the immutability of God. The twentieth cites the authority of Revelation and Tradition as to the immutable aspect of the Divine nature. The twenty-first confirms the doctrine of the dependence of the soul on God by quoting scripture to the effect that it is only in enjoyment that the individual soul is equal to God. The twenty-second closes the chapter and the whole body of aphorisms by saying that according to scripture, the emancipated souls do not return to the world. Not a word is said as to their being merged and lost in Brahman. The only conclusion, therefore, that appears possible to us, is that according to both the *Upanishads* and the *Sutras*, the state of final deliverance is one of fundamental unity with a relative difference, and not of absolute, undifferentiated unity with the Supreme.





## HINDU AND CHRISTIAN THEISM COM- PARED: THE GITA AND THE GOSPEL.

In the following comparison of the *Bhagavatgītā* and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we shall take both the *Gītā* and the Gospel as they have come to us. We shall not inquire as to what portions of them are genuine and authentic, and what portions not, and how far Krishna and Jesus, the central figures in the systems under notice, are historical personages. So far as our study of the recent historical criticism of these works goes,—and it does not go very far,—we believe both Krishna and Jesus to be persons partly historical and partly mythical, though the one may be more or less historical than the other. But it is not as historical persons that we mean to deal with Krishna and Jesus in this essay, but as names that stand for certain teachings, philosophical and ethical,—for certain ideals of spiritual life which every man striving after the higher life must either accept or reject, and must therefore study and criticise. Without any more words of introduction, therefore, we begin our study of the two remarkable types of religion named. We shall first see to what sources of knowledge the two teachers refer their auditors,—to what authority they appeal in propounding their respective systems.

The religion of the Gospel is essentially a religion of faith,—of implicit, uncritical faith in external authority,—in the authority of teachers supposed to have got super-

natural revelations from God, and believed as possessing superhuman powers over nature. To command faith in his Messianic character and mission, and in the truth of his teachings, Jesus appeals, in the first place, to the Old Testament prophecies about the advent of the Redeemer of Israel and of the world, and to the fulfilment of those prophecies in the details of his life. In the second place, he appeals to the testimony of John the Baptist, the last of the Jewish prophets, and the contemporary of Jesus. In the next place, he appeals to his numerous miracles, which, he claims, attest his power over nature, and prove the divine origin of his teachings. This threefold external testimony is what Jesus most habitually appeals to. But there is also a very different and, to us, higher method of teaching that sometimes, though very rarely, shows itself, in his utterances. He seems to appeal to something more internal, something far less local and transitory, and perhaps more convincing than the sources of authority already mentioned. He sometimes speaks of the 'Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of truth' who is in man, but whom man does not know, and whom he will send to his disciples when he has returned to his Father in heaven. This 'Holy Spirit,' it is said, will testify to the truth of his teachings. Jesus also says that the pure in heart shall see God, whether here or in heaven, it is not clearly said. However, with the exception of these rare passages, the whole force of Jesus's teachings is given to the doctrine that it is only the 'Son of God' and a few of God's chosen prophets that have a direct knowledge

of God, and that ordinary humanity can know him only through their teachings. (Matt. XI. 27. John I. 18).

On the other hand, the religion of the *Gītā* is a religion of Reason,—of intellectual intuition,—of normal spiritual insight. Krishna is never tired of extolling *jñānam* (knowledge) and speaks, at every turn, of seeing God in all things and all things in God. He does not, indeed, give us set arguments to prove the existence and attributes of God, but he prescribes regular spiritual disciplines and exercises, which, he teaches, enable every one going through them to see God. He even gives hints and sometimes psychological analyses which help his auditors to detect the universal, the divine element in knowledge and nature. In short, to Krishna, or the author of the *Gītā*, the knowledge and direct perception of God is a normal affair,—something that can be attained by every pure-hearted and earnest devotee, and is not the privilege of a chosen few. The shastras are, indeed, sometimes spoken of as a body of sacred teachings to be respected and carefully studied, but they are also sometimes sharply criticised and indirectly set aside, and are never set up as an external authority independent of Reason and spiritual insight. Krishna, it is true, speaks of himself as the saviour of man, but he does so only after identifying himself with God. When he speaks of himself in this connexion, he means, by his self, no less an object than the universal Self, the Self of all,—the Self which every one can see in Nature and in the soul by spiritual vision.

As a natural consequence of this difference as to the

source of authority in matters spiritual,—this insistence on 'uncritical trust in external authority on the one hand, and on meditation and spiritual concentration on the other, the view of the Divine nature—of the relation of God to Nature and man,—as taken by the two teachers respectively, are very divergent. We shall compare their views at some length under certain heads.

First, as to God's relation to Nature. Jesus constantly speaks of God as his 'Father in heaven.' He speaks of himself as sent down to earth from heaven by God and as returning to heaven after the fulfilment of his mission. The natural interpretation of all this is that Jesus believed God as specially present in a local habitation. He indeed speaks of God as seeing all and directing all things in nature, but he never speaks of him as present in it in the same direct way as he is supposed to be in heaven. His view of nature is, in short, the ordinary common sense view, partly spiritualised by faith in an over-ruling Providence, but as yet unenlightened by philosophical insight into the essential divinity and spirituality of Nature.

To Krishna, on the other hand, not only is Nature full of God (XIII. 13.) but it is really one aspect of the Divine nature. It is the sensuous and changeable aspect of him who is, in his transcendent essence, purely rational, spiritual and unchangeable. Nature is his *aparā prakṛiti*, lower nature, and this lower nature is supported by his *parā prakṛiti*, higher nature, of which human intelligence is a manifestation. The former exists only in relation to the latter. (VII. 4, 5). God, again, is the

support of the *gunas*, the primary qualities of Nature, but he is himself above these qualities. He is both in and above Nature, both immanent and transcendent. (XIII. 14, 15).

As to God's relation to finite intelligence, the same divergence of view is seen in the two teachers, though, perhaps, on account of the deep spiritual insight of both of them, their views of the spiritual life of man meet oftener than their views of Nature. Here, again, however, Jesus's view is, in the main, the ordinary common sense view,—that of a finite spirit independent of and apart from the Divine Spirit; but it is nevertheless hallowed by a deep faith in an all-seeing, holy and loving God who sympathises with man's moral aspirations and constantly draws him nearer and nearer to him by various means. Jesus, however, does not seem to think that in our ordinary uprising and downsitting, in our knowing, feeling and willing, there is any direct hand of God,—that, as the Apostle of the Gentiles says, "In him we live, move and have our being,"—that there is, in human reason, anything that is divine. On the contrary, he speaks distinctly of an Evil Spirit, the Devil, who possesses great power over man, who makes him rebel against God and reject the teachings of Jesus himself and other God-appointed teachers, and who will, at the end, lead him to everlasting punishment unless he is redeemed by faith in the 'Son of God.' Jesus's faith in the power of this great rival of God is so great, that he even calls deluded men the children of the devil. In answer to the Jews who claimed to be the sons of God, Jesus says, "Ye are

of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do...He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." (John, VIII. 44.) To Jesus then, man is not essentially one with God, and his final and perfect union with his Father is not guaranteed by his nature, but is brought about only by the self-immolation of a Divine Mediator. But of this more in the sequel. There is a temptation into which Christian Idealists are very apt to fall, namely, that of ascribing to Jesus the Platonic doctrine of the Logos or the Divine Word or Reason given at the beginning of the fourth gospel. But as it is not put into Jesus's mouth by the Evangelist, and as there is nothing like it in any other part of the gospels, we do not accept it as a part of Christ's teachings. Besides, it does not seem reasonable to ascribe to the same teacher the doctrine of a Divine Word "which lighteth every man coming into the world," and that of a Messiah who comes down from heaven at a particular period of human history, and goes back there in a bodily shape after a short career. However, Jesus's faith in the paternal care and providence of God is deep and impressive, and his delineation of the love of him who watcheth the fall of every sparrow, numbereth the very hairs of our head, and rejoices over the return of the prodigal son, will move the generality of men far more than any philosophical doctrine of the essential unity of God and man.

According to the *Gita*, the human reason is a part or manifestation of the Divine Reason, and the higher,

rational, true self of man, as distinguished from what seems to be his self to his unenlightened sensuous intellect, is nothing but the Divine Self,—so that God constantly abides in man, guides him through sense and understanding to Reason or true self-knowledge, and to final union with him. God says in the *Gītā*, “I am placed in the heart of all; from me come memory, knowledge, and their removal.” ((XV. 15) “And know me also, O descendant of Bhārata, to be the knower in all bodies. (XIII. 2.) Further, “It has been said, great are the senses; greater than the senses is the sensory; greater than the sensory is the understanding. What is greater than the understanding is That (the self). Thus knowing that which is higher than the understanding, and restraining self (*i.e.*, the lower or sensuous self) by the Self (*i.e.*, the higher or rational Self), O you of mighty arms, destroy desire, which is an enemy difficult to be conquered.” (III. 42, 43.)

The descriptions of God's moral relation to man in the *Gītā* are not so impressive as those in the Gospel; but, though more briefly and in less gorgeous imagery, the providing care and saving activity of God is described there in numerous passages. We extract a few; “I am the Father of this universe, the Mother, the Provider, the Grandsire.” (IX. 17). “The Goal, the Sustainer, the Lord, the Supervisor, the Residence, the Asylum, the Friend.” (IX. 18.) “He, knowing me to be the enjoyer of all sacrifices and penances, the great Lord of all worlds, and the Friend of all beings, attains tranquillity. “(V. 29.) To those men who wor-

ship me, meditating on me and no one else, and who are constantly devoted, I give new gifts, and preserve what is acquired by them." (IX. 22.) "Once more listen to my excellent words—most secret of all. Thou art extremely dear to me, therefore will I declare what is for your welfare." (XVIII. 64.)

There is nothing like the Devil of the Gospel in the system of the *Gita*. Both the physical and the moral worlds are, according to it, under the direct control of the Supreme Being. There is no absolute duality in the world, and we think that if the author of the *Gita* could use the language current amongst us now, he would say that there is no absolute evil in the world, evil being only relative and transitory. According to him man does not commit sin under the inspiration of an Evil Spirit, nor under the influence of a nature essentially rebellious and ungodly, but, as he says, under the influence of strong desire, which again is the effect of *rajo guna*, one of the primary qualities of nature. *Rajo guna* seems to be only a name under which all animal activities, all sensuous propensities, are classed. At the end of Chapter III, Krishna gives the following explanation of sin: Sin arises from desire, and desire from *rajo* or animal propensity. Desire pervades the senses, the general sensory or *manas* and also the understanding, and thus hides from us our true self. This true self is to be known and by its power, desire, the root of sin, is to be conquered. We do not vouch for the perfect correctness of this theory of the origin of sin, but it seems to us, at any rate, far more compatible with



the essential unity of the world, the undivided supremacy of God, than the Christian doctrine of an Evil Spirit, or the current doctrine of an essential and inexplicable rebelliousness in the human will, which is, in substance, identical with the Christian doctrine. The *Gita* theory of sin, however, would seem to leave no room for any real hatred of sin. According to it, the sinner would seem to be an object of deep compassion rather than indignation. Those terrible outbursts of righteous anger, for instance, which were called forth in Jesus by the corruptness of Jewish society, and the curses and denunciations which he hurled at the cities of Jerusalem, Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida for rejecting his teachings, would, according to it, be quite indefensible. But though the Divine Being in the *Gita* does not indulge in such righteous indignation, he is yet far from that Divine compassion which would seem to be the only defensible attitude towards sinners according to him. He has indeed no everlasting hell for them, but he also, like Jesus, sometimes speaks of them as if they were acting from an inherent rebelliousness against the Divine will rather than an ignorance of their higher good in consequence of the deep sensuous incrustations of their souls, and as if they deserved retribution rather than correction. For instance, after classifying the spiritual inheritance with which men come into the world into the godly (*daivi*) and the ungodly or demoniac (*āsuri*), and after giving a graphic description of the persons who have unfortunately come with the latter inheritance, the Divine Being says,—“These enemies, ferocious, mean-

est of men, and unholy, I continually hurl down to these worlds, only demoniac wombs. Coming into demoniac wombs, deluded in every birth, they go down to the vilest state, O son of Kunti, without coming to me (XVII. 19, 20).\*

This brings us to the doctrine of rewards and punishments as taught in the *Gita* and the Gospel. The current doctrine of punishment by mere repentance does not find any place in either the one or the other. Both seem to think that punishment in some more tangible form is necessary, and both seem to consider an incorporeal spirit as incapable of receiving either reward or punishment. According to the Gospel, the dead will rise from their graves on the last day on hearing the trumpet of the Archangel, and will be gathered round the throne of the Son of God, who will invite the faithful to inherit the kingdom of God, and send the sinners to everlasting hell prepared for the devils, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." (Mark IX. 46.) The *Gita* scheme of reward and punishment is very different. Every moral agent will, on the destruction of his present body, enter a higher or a lower frame, will occupy a higher or a lower station in the scale of beings according to his works. According to the *Gita*, all living creatures are moral agents, and owe their present relative position in the scale of beings to the virtuousness

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\* The translations in this and the following extracts are taken, with occasional alterations, from Mr. Telang's translation of the *Bhagavadgita* in the "Sacred Books of the East" series.

or viciousness of their past lives. It does not say what may be the end of the descending scale of beings, or whether there is any end at all. But the end of the ascending scale is clearly indicated. It is final union with God. What the nature of this union is we shall see hereafter. As to the doctrine of transmigration, we may remark that though it does not form an essential part of Jesus's system, neither his countrymen nor he himself was quite free from it. (See Mark IX. 13. Luke IX. 7, 8.)

We shall now say a few words on the *Gītā* and the Gospel doctrine of incarnation, and then pass on to a review of the 'scheme of salvation' as set forth in the two systems. The *Gītā* doctrine of incarnation seems to us an essentially Vedantic doctrine,—a doctrine of universal, not special, incarnation. According to it, the creative energy of God perpetually manifests itself in the form of the various objects of nature, so that every one of them, and specially the more glorious among them, may be called his *bībhūti*s or manifestations, and Nature, as a whole, his *visvarupa*. On the other hand, the Divine Reason manifests itself in man as his Reason, and when man ceases to identify himself with his body, his sensory and even his understanding, including his feeling of individuality (*ahankāra*), and sees that his real self is not one of the many objects of Nature, gross or fine, but the one undivided Self for which and by which all things exist,—when, in short, he identifies himself with the universal Self, and lives in perpetual consciousness of that identity, he is one with God, and is entitled to

speak in the first person when speaking of the Supreme Being. The attainment of divinity or *brahmatva* in this sense is open to every soul, and if we are to believe the historians of Hindu spiritual life, many devotees did attain and are still attaining such divinity, and Krishna is only one of them. Krishna himself holds out the promise of such divinity to every earnest devotee in several passages of the *Gita*. This is the Vedantic interpretation of Krishna's incarnation. According to it, the assumption of humanity on the part of the Deity means nothing but the revelation, to man, of his essential unity with God, and his perpetually living and acting in the light of this revelation. As the attainment of such divinity by man is of comparatively rare occurrence, taking place only at long intervals in the history of man, and as it is necessarily followed by remarkable events in the spiritual history of man, namely, the extraordinary acts of these divine men for the good of mankind,—the occasionalness of Divine incarnation in this sense is not incompatible, a Vedantist would say, with the perpetual presence of God in Nature and in man, so that it is not without truth, the same theorist would say, that God is represented as saying in the *Gita*,—"Whenever, O descendant of Bhârata, righteousness languishes, and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, I create myself. I am born age after age for the destruction of evil-doers, and the establishment of righteousness." (IV. 7, 8).

We cannot say but that the above theory is a consistent explanation of the assumption of divinity by Krishna, and that it most probably expresses the mind of Krishna

or whoever else may have uttered or written the words ascribed to him. The Vaishnava or popular view of Krishna's incarnation, namely that he was an incarnation of the Deity in a special sense, that his divinity was not something which he attained by discipline like ordinary morals, but something which he possessed from eternity, and that it is a character incommunicable to finite beings, such a view, we say, seems to be much farther from the mind of the author of the *Gītā* than the one we have given above.

We now turn to the Gospel doctrine of incarnation. With the exception of one or two mystical passages in the fourth gospel which are contradicted by others in the same gospel, and are not confirmed by any in the other three, there is nothing in the teachings of Jesus which shows that he believed in any community of essence between God and man. Man, he seems to think, is a created being, made indeed in the likeness of God, *i.e.* a spirit as God is a spirit, but not one with him in any aspect of his nature. If then, there is any theory of incarnation in the theology of the Gospel, it must be a theory of special incarnation, a theory that is concerned with Jesus alone. Let us see, then, what Jesus is represented to be in the Gospel narrative. The following points will be clear on a careful study of the four gospels:—

1. Jesus was not born in the ordinary way. He had no human father, but was born under the influence of the Holy Spirit. (Matt. I. 18. Luke, I. 35, 36).
2. He existed before he was born on earth, and

before even the creation of the world. (Mark, XII. 35-37. John, XVII. 5).

3. He is the promised Messiah of ancient Jewish prophecy. (Matt. XVI. and XXVI.)

4. To him is committed the judgment of mankind, and at the end of the world, he will come to judge the dead and living. (Matt. XXV.)

5. He is the "Son of God" in a special sense. In the parable of the vineyard in Matt. XXI, he describes the other prophets of God as "servants," and himself as the "Son of God."

6. He is the "only begotten Son" of God, which perhaps means that he shares the essence of the Father, whereas ordinary men and other finite beings are mere creatures, created by God, not begotten. (John, III.)

7. He is one with God, yet not quite one, for he is said to be also lesser than God. In John, X. 30, he says, "I and my Father are one," but when the Jews take up stones to stone him for uttering what to them seems blasphemy, he gives an explanation of this remarkable utterance which greatly modifies its meaning. He says, "Is it not written in your law (Psalms, LXXXII. 6.) ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken) say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said I am the son of God?" The explanation takes away to a great extent the ambiguity of the above saying. If Christ had meant to say that he was God incarnate, the very God infinite in flesh, he would have told so plainly: but evidently he

did not mean to say so, and did not say it. He said, not that he was God, but only the son of God. His special claim to be called the son of God was founded, it seems, on the fact that "the Father sanctified [him] and sent [him] into the world."

We thus see how the *Gita* and the Gospel views of incarnation differ. Jesus, though he declares himself one with the Father, has not lost his individuality, and remains a mediator between God and man, whereas Krishna, in identifying himself with God, loses his individuality, and remains only as a name for the all-pervading, highest and universal Self.

We shall now deal with the more practical aspects of the two systems under the following heads,—(1) The final object of human life as taught by them, (2) The moral code which they inculcate and (3) The spiritual disciplines which they enjoin as means to the attainment of that object.

The final object of the teachings of the Gospel is the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. This of course implies the realisation of a moral ideal in the lives of the subjects, but the kingdom itself is not entirely spiritual. In answer to the Pharisees who sought to know when the Kingdom of Heaven would come, Jesus indeed says that it should be sought within us, but this only seems to mean that those who are not pure in heart cannot enter it. That the coming of the kingdom would take place at a particular time, and would be preceded by external signs, Jesus asserts several times. That its centre would be in the Holy Land, and its king Jesus

himself and its princes and governors his disciples, also seems clear. ~~That~~ its rewards and punishments would be material, we have already seen to some extent. ~~The~~ following quotations will make it more clear: "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve ~~thrones~~, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath ~~forsaken~~ houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive ~~an~~ hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. (Matt. XIX. 28, 29).

The final object of the teachings of the *Gītā* is variously described as union with God (*brahma yoga*) annihilation of individuality in God (*Brāhmi sthiti*) and finding God (*Brahma-prāpti*). ~~We shall try to make the~~ idea clear by a few extracts:

"He who knows Brahman, whose mind is steady, who is not deluded, and who rests in Brahman, does not exult on finding anything agreeable, nor does he grieve on finding anything disagreeable. The devotee whose happiness is in the Self, whose rest is in the Self, and whose light also is in the Self, becomes one with Brahman and obtains *Brahmanirvān*. The sages whose sins have perished, whose doubts are resolved, who are self-restrained, and who are intent on the welfare of all beings, obtain *Brahmanirvān*. The ascetics who are free from desire and wrath, and whose minds are restrained, and who have knowledge of the Self, have *Brahmanirvān* on both sides (of death). He who has restrained the



senses, the sensory and the understanding, whose highest aim is final emancipation, from whom desire, fear, and wrath have departed, has already obtained salvation. He, knowing me to be the acceptor of all sacrifices and disciplines, the great Lord of the worlds, and the friend of all beings, attains tranquillity (Chap. V.)

Again, in the eighteenth chapter, Krishna says, He who, abandoning egotism, stubbornness, arrogance, desire, anger, and all belongings, has no thought that this or that is mine and who is tranquil, becomes fit for assimilation with Brahman and with a tranquil self he grieves not, desires not; but being alike to all beings, obtains the highest devotion to me. By that devotion he truly understands who I am and how great. And then understanding me truly, he enters into me. Always performing all duties with a sense of dependence on me, he, through my favour, obtains the imperishable and eternal seat."

We shall now examine the moral ideals which the two systems hold up to us, and which must be realised before either the kingdom of heaven or union with Brahman can be attained. It must be remembered that the audience of Jesus consisted mostly of uneducated, unrefined, low class people, whereas Krishna addresses or is supposed to address a high-born and highly cultured prince. This explains the diffuseness and minuteness of Christ's moral teachings on the one hand, and the studied brevity with which moral principles are enunciated by Krishna on the other. To begin with the Gospel system of morals, the following are the chief points in that code.

1. *Purity of heart.*—Even an impure look is equal to adultery. An offending eye is to be plucked out lest it cause the whole body to be cast into hell. Love of God and love of man in the heart,—loving even our enemies, and praying for them.

2. *Purity in words.*—No swearing, nothing more than a yea, yea, nay, nay, in our speech. No angry words, not even ‘thou fool.’

3. *Purity of action.*—The ten commandments must be strictly observed. An offender must be forgiven seventy times seven, and Jesus himself prays for the forgiveness of those who nailed him to the cross. Evil must not be resisted. “Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.” But Jesus sees no harm in exposing and denouncing those who reject our teachings and misunderstand us, not even in calling them a ‘generation of vipers’ and ‘children of the devil.’ We should not curse them, but there is no harm in assuring them that that the curse of God is upon them. In sending the twelve apostles to preach, Jesus says, “When ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out

of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you. It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city." (Matt X.) Our neighbours must be loved as ourselves, and in the account of the good Samaritan, the faithful Centurion and the woman of Samaria, it is taught that all men are our neighbours. Yet a distinction, it seems, must be made between the Jews, the chosen people of God, on the one hand, and the Samaritans, the outcasts of Jewish society, and the Gentiles on the other. In sending his apostles, Jesus tells them not to enter any city of the Samaritans and the Gentiles, and when a Greek woman asks him to cast the devil out of her daughter, he at first tells her, "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs." But in this case, as often elsewhere, the humility and faith of the stranger draw him to her and melt his Jewish exclusiveness, and at the end he seems to have extended the ministration of his Gospel to all mankind.

4. *Renunciation of worldliness, or vairagya, as we call it.*—No thought should be taken of what we shall eat, drink and put on. Labouring for the maintenance of the body seems to be an evil in the eyes of Jesus. "Take therefore no thought," he says, "for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." No stores should be laid up, but we should trust that God would feed us like the fowls which neither sow nor reap nor lay-up, and clothe us as he does the lilies which toil not

and spin not. When a rich man who has kept all the commandments, asks Jesus how he can be perfect, he advises him to sell all, give to the poor and join him. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," says he, "and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The meaning of all this is often twisted to suit modern and more liberal ideas, but we think Christ's words ought to be taken in their literal sense. When we consider that Jesus was neither a philosopher nor a politician, that he believed the end of the world to be very near, so much so that it would come about before the passing away of the generation in which he lived, and that the kingdom of heaven he looked for was an earthly as well as a spiritual kingdom, with material rewards and punishments, it seems nothing unnatural for him to have advised people to forsake earthly things for a kingdom in which these things would be restored a hundredfold, and that in the course of a few years. It is perhaps needless to add under this head that Jesus's exhortation to renounce worldliness does not exclude the renunciation of desire for reward, and that to almost every admonition to do good actions, he appends the promise of a reward from God.

Jesus seems to sum up his code of morals into the noble words: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect," to which every earnest soul must respond.

Let us now consider the chief points in the ethical system of the *Gita*.

Krishna seems to sum up the main features of a godly character in the following words :—

“ Freedom from fear, purity of heart, perseverance in (the pursuit of) knowledge and abstraction of mind, gifts, self-restraint, and sacrifice, study of the Vedas, penance, straightforwardness, harmlessness, truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquillity, freedom from the habit of backbiting, compassion for all beings, freedom from avarice, gentleness, modesty, absence of vain activity, noble-mindedness, forgiveness, courage, purity, freedom from a desire to injure others, absence of vanity, these, O descendant of Bhàrata, are his who is born to God-like endowments. (XVI. 1-3.)

As to purity of heart, even a casual and careless reader of the *Gītā* will not fail to notice that Krishna is never tired of insisting that not only should all sinful desires be eschewed, but all desires, that is, desires, for individual gratification, should be given up, and all actions done from a sense of duty to God. For example, “ For the heart which follows the rambling senses, leads away his judgement, as the wind leads a boat astray upon the waters. Therefore, O you of mighty arms, his mind is steady whose senses are restrained on all sides from from objects of sense. He into whom all objects of desire enter, as waters enter the ocean, which, being replenished, keeps its position unmoved,—he only obtains tranquillity; not he who desires those objects of desire. (Chap. II.) As to the discipline of the mind, Krishna briefly says, “ Calmness of mind, taciturnity,

self-restraint and purity of heart, this is called *mānasana-tapah*." (XVII. 16.)

As to the discipline of the tongue: "The speech which causes no sorrow, which is true, agreeable, and beneficial, and the study of the Vedas, this is called *vānmayan-tapah*." (XVII. 15.)

As to action and renunciation, the *Gītā* sets itself decidedly against those ease-loving *sanyāsis* who have, almost from time immemorial, preached, by precept and example, against actions, both ritual and ethical. It recognises fully, indeed, the binding power of action, both the worldliness and 'other-worldliness' which it induces. But it sees, with rare insight, that this binding power is due to the desire for individual satisfaction which generally forms the motive of action. Hence, if such desire can be eschewed and work can be done under a sense of duty to God, and without any admixture of egotism (*ahankāra*), *karma*, it sees, not only loses its binding power, but becomes a means of union with God. This, however, is a very large subject, and would require much time and discussion for a satisfactory treatment. We shall, on the present occasion, content ourselves by making only one or two short extracts on the subject from the *Gītā*. In the eighteenth Chapter, Krishna seems to sum up his views on *karma* thus: The actions of sacrifice, gifts and penance should not be abandoned; they must needs be performed, for sacrifices, gifts and penances are means of sanctification to the wise. But even these actions, O son of Prithā, should be performed without attachment and desire for fruit; such is my excellent and

decided opinion. The renunciation of prescribed action is not proper. Its abandonment through delusion is described as of the quality of darkness. When a man abandons actions, merely as being troublesome, through fear of bodily affliction, he does not obtain the fruit of abandonment by making such passionate abandonment. When prescribed action is performed, O Arjuna, abandoning attachment and fruit also, merely because it ought to be performed, that is deemed to be a good abandonment." "Worshipping, by the performance of his own duty, him from whom all things proceed, and by whom all this is permeated, a man obtains perfection."

Here is the golden rule of the *Gītā*; "That devotee, O Arjuna, is deemed to be the best who looks upon the pleasures or pains of all as his own." But with all this Krishna defends war, righteous war, war that is necessary to vindicate the rights of one party against the encroachments of another, and in the interests of good government. Those who find fault with this aspect of the teachings of the *Gītā*, should remember that, according to the *Mahābhārata*, the Kurukshetra War had become inevitable, all arbitration having failed, and that Krishna himself had failed in his embassy as a peace-maker and had realised the perversity and incorrigibility of Duryodhana. The arguments which Krishna brings forward to convince Arjuna of the desirability of fighting may not be always convincing to us, but when we remember that it was one Kshatriya hero addressing another on the special duty of their particular caste, that after the appeal to the comparatively lower motives had

failed, Krishna appealed to Arjuna's sense of duty as a Kshatriya, and that he enjoined his disciple to discharge this painful duty from the standpoint of *yoga*, the universal or Divine standpoint, there remains little that is objectionable in Krishna's exhortation to fight.

Having spoken of the Jewish exclusiveness of Jesus, we must say a word or two on Krishna's idea of caste. Krishna or the writer of the *Gita* seems to have believed in a natural division of castes according to *guna* and *karma*, that is, according to inherited qualities and functions or duties. He also seems to have believed in the general inferiority of women to men. But he surely did not believe that the station in life to which a person is born bars out him or her from attaining even the highest object of human life. For example, in Chapter IX. he says: "For, O son of Pritha, even those who are of sinful birth, women, Vaisyas and Sudras, attain the supreme goal on resorting to me." (IX. 32)

We now come to the subject of devotional exercises as respectively prescribed in the two systems for the attainment of the end set by them before the devotee. In the Gospel, we find only one definite exercise taught, that which is called the Lord's Prayer, the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples in response to their wishes that he should teach them how to pray. The prayer itself is a remarkable one, as touching upon, in a few words, the main aspects of spiritual life. But it need hardly be said that unless expanded and elaborated, it cannot serve the purposes of higher spiritual life. As Christianity grew deeper and



larger gradually, elaborate systems of devotional culture were of course framed and adopted by those hankering after the higher life ; but the gospels themselves teach no such systems, and the generality of Christians, those whose spiritual lives are fed by nothing more than the regular study of the Bible, seem to know nothing of such systems. The general dryness and shallowness of Christian spirituality is perhaps not a little due to this dearth of devotional exercises. Everything is different in the *Gita*. It teaches devotional exercises at almost every step, each Chapter prescribing a more or less distinct *yoga* or discipline. The exercises are not, indeed, really so various as they appear at first sight ; but on the other hand, exercises which would take volumes to expound in detail are touched upon by the author in a few lines. Several of the disciplines prescribed have been indirectly explained by us while speaking of the ethical code of the *Gita* and of the spiritual ideal it sets before us. We shall here briefly touch upon the following :—(1) *Dhyāna-yoga*, (2) *Bibhūti-yoga* (3) *Viśvarūpa-darśhanam* and *Bhakti-yoga*.

*Dhyāna-yoga* is taught in detail in the sixth Chapter of the *Gita*, but valuable hints on it are scattered throughout the book. It consists in drawing away the senses and the mind from phenomenal objects and fixing it upon the Supreme Self. As described in the *Gita*, the discipline presupposes a clear conception of the relation of God to the world and to the finite soul, a knowledge of how and where to seek the Self on which the mind is to be fixed. The author describes this dis-

cipline as a source of the highest joy—the joy of “touching God” and as the way to the attainment of a truly holy life. The object to be sought is not a finite object, but the Infinite itself, the all-pervading One, and the vision of the Universal Self as the self in one’s individual life opens the way to its realization as the Self of every one else and of what is called the material world.

(2) *Bibhâti-yoga* consists in the habit of realizing the presence of God in those objects of Nature which are characterized by superior power, grandeur, beauty or usefulness, as also in men of uncommon heroism, wisdom or holiness. All objects are indeed manifestations of God, but for ordinary mortals it is not possible to take them as such before they have passed through a course of spiritual development. It is easier to realize God in unusually great objects and persons than in Nature in general and in ordinary persons. The Himalayas help us incomparably more in feeling the Divine presence than small hills, the Ganges more than ordinary streams. So, it is easier to feel the divinity of man when contemplating a Râma or a Krishna, a Kapila or a Vyâsa than a person of mediocre powers and attainments. The *Gîtâ*, therefore, exhorts us to contemplate these *bibhâtis* or special manifestations of God as a help to his realization everywhere. In the enumeration of these *bibhâtis*, the author of the *Gîtâ* of course follows his own scientific and historical light, a light which may be insufficient for us, or even mislead us sometimes. But whether this or that *bibhâti* mentioned by him be such a glorious object or not as he describes it to be, the dis-

cipline inculcated by him must be pronounced to be a really efficacious one, and must be adopted by those who, not contented with the mere knowledge or belief that God is, or that he is near, seek to make this knowledge a living reality. We may correct and enlarge the list of divine manifestations by the light of modern science and history. In doing so, we should be only following the spirit of the *Gītā*, for it distinctly says at the close of its enumeration of *bībhūtis* that it is unnecessary to name any more than what have been named, as the whole world is God's manifestation—one aspect of his nature.

(3) *Viśvarūpadarśhanam*, the vision of God as manifested in the, or, to be more correct, as the various visible objects of Nature comes naturally after *bībhūti-yoga*. The devotee has attained success in the practice of seeing God in special objects. He now desires to see him in all objects. It is of course impossible to see God with carnal eyes, and so Arjuna, who represents the worshipper, obtains *dīvyā*, i. e. heavenly or spiritual eyes from his Guide and Instructor. When such eyes are obtained in the course of spiritual culture, the veil, the materiality, of Nature is removed, and it appears as the manifold form of the Formless. So the veil of humanity that enshrouds the divinity of man is also taken away, and we, like Arjuna, lament our blindness in treating with lightness and irreverence the Infinite One in the persons of our friends and connexions. This vision of God as the All-in-all must be, at less advanced stages of spiritual life, a too dazzling

one to be borne for a long time, and so Arjuna is represented as praying Krishna, after looking at him as the spiritualized cosmos, to hide his glorious cosmic form and re-assume his everyday human appearance. We do the same every day when, from the contemplation of Nature and humanity from the divine standpoint in our moments of rapt worship, moments in which we rise above ordinary conceptions and earthly relations, we relapse into our habitual moods and feel comfort in finding ourselves among the realities of the material world and embraced by the sweet relations of domestic and social life. But nevertheless, the difference between a life occasionally visited by the blessed vision of the All-in-all, and one to which such a vision is a stranger, is immense; and, notwithstanding the failures of ordinary devotees, a life in which the perpetual vision of all things in God and God in all things is a never-failing light and the ordinary conceptions and relations of practical life only a system of unavoidable conventionalities is, by no means, inconceivable. Whether or not such a life has ever been realized in flesh, it guides every earnest soul in all its struggles and aspirations, and is realized in every step it takes towards union with the All-holy.

(4) *Bhaktiyoga*, the offering of reverential worship to God. The author of the *Gītā* is never tired of speaking of the great importance of reverential worship. Some of the forms in which it should be offered are (1) the contemplation of God's power, wisdom and goodness, (2) remembering him constantly with a devout

heart, (3) conversing on him with devout persons, (4) singing his praises with fellow-worshippers, and (5) doing all actions as his service. The reader will find these disciplines spoken of throughout the book, and particularly in the twelfth and eighteen Chapters. The contending followers of the *jñāna* and *bhakti* schools have tried to identify the *Gītā* each with their exclusive doctrines. The *Gītā* refuses to be used for sectarian purposes. The praises of both *jñānam* and *bhakti* are so much intermingled in it, that one cannot say to which it attaches more importance. The fact is, *jñānam* and *bhakti* are substantially the same with it, the intellectual and emotional aspects of the same spiritual fact—the union of the finite with the Infinite. It is decidedly opposed to those who would attain union with the Supreme without any emotional culture, without the development of pious feelings in the heart. It distinctly says that the Divine nature cannot be accurately known without *bhakti*. It is, again, no less opposed to those to whom God and his worshipper are two substances. It unmistakably teaches the fundamental unity of God and man, and aims at a higher, deeper unity in all the disciplines it prescribes. That this final unity too leaves an unresolved element of practical difference, seems to be the purport of the whole system, as could not but be the case with one so much penetrated with the spirit of the Upanishads as the author of the *Bhagavāḡītā*.

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